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"HIS FATHER WAS A LAZY, SHIFTLESS FELLOW."

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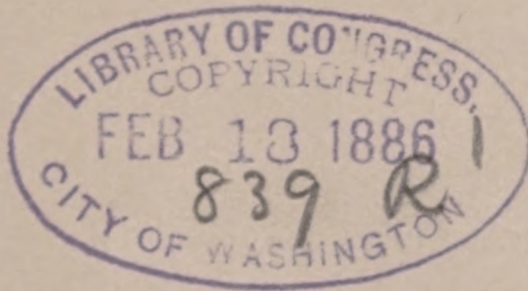
THE OLD TAVERN,

AND OTHER STORIES.

BY

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"ALL FOR MONEY"; "TEN CENTS"; "WEALTH AND WINE"; "OUR HOMES";
"THE TEMPERANCE DOCTOR"; "AUNT DINAH'S PLEDGE"; "AT LION'S
MOUTH"; "OUT OF THE FIRE"; "FROM FATHER TO SON";
"BREAD AND BEER"; "FIFE AND DRUM"; "DRINK-
ING JACK," ETC.



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THE OLD TAVERN.

CHAPTER I.

THE BARE-FOOTED BOY.

A BOY stood digging his toes into the sand, wiping the tears from his eyes, and wondering of the future. His father had been buried the previous day, and that morning his mother had told him he must look out for his own dinner and supper, as she could not provide them.

“His father was a lazy, shiftless fellow, drinking just enough to keep himself poor as poverty. It don't seem as though his family were any better off for having him 'round; but they kept off the town, and that is more than they will do now. The children will have to be put out, and I'm willing to do my part toward providing for them by taking the oldest boy. I guess I can make him pay for his board and clothes. I'm on my way now to see the selectmen about it. They have a meeting at Patten's to-day, and I want some help through haying.”

Abner Hanson, the bare-footed boy, clasped his hands tightly, and listened as for his life, while Mr. Grimshaw, from whom he was concealed by a clump of alders, thus talked of his father and himself. He was

"the oldest boy" whose services were to be secured, and for a moment he wished he could die and so be out of all trouble. The next moment, however, he realized that something must be done to avert the fate which threatened him.

Mr. Patten lived two miles away by the road, but there was a short cut through the woods and across the brook, on a fallen tree, and he could easily outrun Mr. Grimshaw's old horse. He had no time for deliberation; but, as he ran, he resolved to take his fortune into his own hands and do the best of which he was capable.

"Where are the selectmen?" he asked, when he reached Mr. Patten's house; and, upon being told, he swung himself through an open window and stood before them, as he said hoarsely: "Don't send me to Mr. Grimshaw's. I can take care of myself and more, too. Try me and see. He is coming. I heard him say so; and——"

The sentence was left unfinished. The boy had fallen to the floor in a dead faint. When restored to consciousness, although unable to rise from the lounge on which he had been placed, he whispered:

"Mr. Grimshaw is coming; I hear his wagon rattle. Don't send me to live with him. I can take care of myself."

"Of course you can take care of yourself," replied Mr. Patten assuringly. "Mr. Grimshaw has nothing to do about it; so just lie still and rest. By and by you and I will have a talk, and make up our minds what is best for you to do."

Mr. Grimshaw made known his errand, only to be

told that the town had no authority to dispose of the boy in question, who was quite able to provide for himself, and would doubtless assist his mother in caring for the younger children.

Abner Hanson heard this estimate of his character ; and in the hours he was resting, with closed eyes, new hopes and ambitions awoke within him. When at last he arose to go, Mrs. Patten said to him kindly :

“Stay and have dinner with us.”

“I shall be glad to, if I can earn it ; but I never mean to take another cent’s worth that I don’t earn,” he replied. “I am going to earn my own living, and I am ready to begin this minute.”

“Then this minute it is, Abner. I want some wood split up fine, and I should like it as soon as I can have it.”

The boy did not stop to think how he hated splitting wood, or how he complained when his mother asked him to do it ; but, setting to work with a will, he had some ready for the stove in the shortest possible time. He earned his dinner, after which he ate it with great relish.

“Have you a mind to earn your supper ?” then asked Mrs. Patten ; and being answered in the affirmative, Abner Hanson was sent into the garden to pull weeds.

He had never known so long an afternoon, and many times he was tempted to throw down his trowel and run, but he persevered until called to such a supper as he had seldom eaten.

“How much do you think you have earned this afternoon ?” asked Mr. Patten, who had carefully inspected his work, and could guess something of the effort it had cost him.

"I don't know, sir, but I hope I paid for my supper," replied the boy.

"You did, and more too. There is a basket and a pail on the kitchen table you can take home to your mother, and you can tell her you have done nobly to-day. What are you going to do to-morrow? Remember, my boy, there is always to-morrow to be considered."

"Yes, sir ; and I want to work to-morrow."

"Then come here, if nothing better offers. I have all the help I really need, but I can keep you busy at something."

Mrs. Hanson hardly cared or thought where her boy spent the day, so long as he made no demands upon her. Indeed, she never cared much for anything beyond the immediate wants of the hour. While her husband had failed to provide suitably for his family, she had also failed to make the most of what he had provided.

"So you've come back," she said in an indifferent tone, as she heard Abner's footsteps.

"Yes, mother, and brought you something, too," he replied. "Come and see. Here are meat and potatoes and flour and milk, and I earned them, Mr. Patten said I did. I had my dinner and supper besides, and these are for you and the children."

"Who'd have thought it! I'm most sorry, now, for what I told Mr. Grimshaw. He came here and said he'd give you your board and a suit of clothes if you'd work for him through haying, and I told him you'd go."

"I sha'n't do it, mother, if you did tell him so. You told me yesterday morning I must look out for myself,

and I'm going to. I'll help you, too ; but I won't work for Mr. Grimshaw."

"Well, well, Abner, do as you are a-mind to. You always did, and I suppose you always will. But I gave my word, and I don't know what he'll say."

"You gave your word to me first, mother."

"I suppose I did ; but I didn't know how you'd take it."

"I took it just as you said, and I'm going to live up to it. I'll talk to Mr. Patten about it the first thing to-morrow morning. I am so tired, I must go straight to bed, and be sure you call me as soon as it is light enough to see."

If the afternoon had been long, the night was all too short for the tired boy, who needed to be reminded that he was going to Mr. Patten's before he could fairly rouse himself from sleep.

For the second time Mr. Grimshaw found his plans set aside ; and after threatening both mother and son with a suit for breach of contract, he went his way

CHAPTER II.

THE SHERIFF'S SALE.

FOR the third time in a score of years, the old tavern on the hill was advertised to be sold at auction. A hundred acres of the best land in town belonged to the estate of which it was a part ; and yet many prophesied that it would sell for a merely nominal sum. Strange scenes had been enacted in the large, low rooms, until people came to regard the house as sure to bring misfortune to its owner.

Notwithstanding this, however, there was a large attendance on the day of the sale. Men estimated the cost of erecting new buildings, and it was evident that they would bid cautiously. But at length a stranger appeared among them, whose whole appearance indicated that he was there with a purpose ; and it was not long before the property was declared sold to Samuel Redfield.

"You'll be likely to tear down the house and build to suit yourself, won't you?" said an old man, looking sharply at the purchaser.

"The house suits me as it is," was replied. "I always thought it pleasant and convenient."

"Then you have seen it before," continued the first speaker.

"Yes, sir ; I saw a good deal of it when I was a boy."

"Be you the Sam Redfield that was bound out to old Martin to pay a liquor bill?"

"I am, sir."

"You didn't stay here but about a year. Got tired of hard work and hard fare, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir, I did; and I thought I'd take matters into my own hands."

"You've made money since then?"

"I've made enough to pay cash down for all I have bought to-day."

"Well, I am glad of it. Going to keep tavern?"

"No, sir; I am going to bring my wife and children here, and make this our home, while I see what I can do at farming."

"Is your mother living?" asked the old man, whose curiosity seemed to increase with the information he obtained.

"I am the last of the family," said Mr. Redfield. And here the colloquy was interrupted.

Before night it was known throughout the town that Sam Redfield had bought the old tavern and was coming there to live. This recalled the history of his boyhood, and furnished a topic for general conversation.

Thirty-five years before, when the hard-hearted man to whom he was bound called him to his morning's work he had failed to appear, and since then nothing had been heard of him in the vicinity.

"He had a hard time when he was a boy, but he looks as though he had come out all right," remarked Mr. Patten. "Anyway he has paid for what he bought, and we are going to have him for a neighbor."

"Was he a real poor boy, poor as I am?" asked

Abner Hanson, who was greatly interested in all he had heard of this man.

"He was poorer than you ever thought of being," replied Mr. Patten. "Why, he was as bad as sold by his father to pay an old liquor bill, and he was shamefully abused every day he lived with Simon Martin. I don't suppose he got half enough to eat, unless he stole it, and he wasn't decently clothed any time of year. In summer, that didn't make so much difference, but in winter he must have suffered with cold. All that happened when I was young, and didn't think much about such things. But it wouldn't be allowed now. 'Old Martin,' as everybody called the tavern-keeper, was thought to be rich, and he managed about as he pleased. There were strange stories told of his boys; and after he went away from here, folks said he was poor as the poorest. He deserved to be poor, if ever any man did."

"Was he a drunkard?" asked Abner.

"A perfect sot, the last of the time he was here; and his boys followed his example. He was one of the worst drunkards that ever lived in town, and I have heard my father say he was the smartest boy in the center district school, though he never seemed to have any feeling for anybody but himself. He and Zeke Redfield were great cronies, but in the end he got Zeke so much in his power he did the thinking for both. Sam was more independent and started out on his own hook to come back when he pleased."

"I wish I could work for this Mr. Redfield," said the boy, whose admiration for the man constantly increased. "I like to stay here, but you told me you didn't need

me, only you keep me busy, so I can earn something."

"Perhaps you could get a chance with him if you should apply for it; and now is the best time to ask him. I heard him say he should have the grounds cleared up and put in order as soon as possible. Somebody else may be before you in looking for a job, unless you speak quick. I advise you to see him before you go home to-night."

Abner Hanson stayed to hear no more; and while the west windows of the old tavern glowed in the rays of the setting sun, Mr. Redfield paused in his walk to and fro on the piazza to listen to the request of a bare-headed, bare-footed boy who wished for a chance to work and earn a living.

"What can you do?" asked the gentleman.

"I don't know, sir, because I never tried many things," replied the boy, adding frankly: "I've been lazy and shiftless, but now I am going to do just as well as I can."

"What made such a change in your habits?"

"I had to change. Father died, and mother said I must look out for myself. Father wasn't much good, and perhaps, if he had lived, I should have been like him. Now I mean to be just as different as I can be. He drank liquor, but I won't taste a drop if I'm killed for it."

"A good resolution, my boy. Stick to it, and ninety chances out of a hundred you'll get ahead in the world."

"Was that the way you got ahead, sir?"

"That was one thing that helped me, though it took a good deal of hard work besides."

"I'm willing to work hard, and I wanted to work for you, because folks say you used to be a poor boy."

"Come here to-morrow morning and I will find you something to do. We will see how we can get along together for a week. But stay; what wages do you expect? You will have to board yourself. I intend to sleep in my house to-night, and I shall make my headquarters here, but I can not undertake to provide for two. I am a pretty good cook on a small scale, but might make a failure if I attempted too much. So you must look out for your own board."

"Yes, sir, I can. Mother cooks good things now. I can have breakfast and supper at home, and bring my dinner with me. What time shall I come in the morning?"

"Come early."

"And please, sir, what would you call early?"

"When the birds begin to sing," replied Mr. Redfield with a smile. "I must make a long day to-morrow."

"Yes, sir; I will help you all I can."

"Then good evening. I shall expect you."

The next morning he found the boy curled up in the warmest corner of the piazza, with an old woollen shawl around him, fast asleep.

"I didn't mean to oversleep," said Abner, rubbing his eyes, and too much confused to know where he was.

"I didn't mean you should catch me napping, but you did," said the gentleman. "You came earlier than I expected."

"The birds were just beginning to sing when I got here. Mother made me take this shawl, so I could

keep warm. I wanted to be in season. Please, sir what shall I do first?"

Upon being told, Abner Hanson began work for Mr Redfield, so happy in his good fortune that he half fancied he could never again be tired.

CHAPTER III.

THE SCARRED FACE.

It had been a dark, rainy day, and the lowering clouds threatened a darker night. Mr. Redfield had gone for his family, and there was no one about the house except Abner Hanson, who was preparing to go home, when he thought he saw some one moving among the shrubbery at the foot of the garden.

Who could it be?

He hastened to assure himself if he had been mistaken, and there, evidently attempting concealment, was the most wretched-looking object he had ever seen. An old man, with grizzly beard and long, matted hair glared at him with almost the ferocity of a wild beast.

"What you want here?" he growled, rather than spoke. "What you want down here. A man has a right to stay out-doors in this part of the country, hain't he?"

"I suppose so; but it aint very comfortable out-doors such a day as this. You don't calculate to stay here all night, do you?" said Abner, with some hesitation.

"That aint anybody's business but mine," responded the man, angrily. "You can go right away and take care of yourself. I don't want any of your help."

"But you ought to go somewhere and get dry. You must be wet to your skin."

"I calculate to be wet ; I never want to be dry. You better be looking out for your own skin. You needn't stay here another minute. I know what I'm about. I fell down, a ways back," remarked the man, glancing at his mud-stained garments. "I aint more than half drunk, so you needn't stand there looking at me."

Having no excuse for remaining longer, and being again summarily dismissed, Abner Hanson started for home, thinking, as he went, of this strange interview. His mother had seen too many strolling vagabonds to attach much importance to the presence of the man in the garden ; but when, a few days later, Mr. Redfield returned, and the story was again told, there was a more interested listener.

"Had the man a scar on his face?" this gentleman asked quickly.

"Yes, sir ; it looked as though there had been a great gash across his left cheek. He kept his hat pulled down on that side ; but it got caught in the bushes, so it came off, and I saw his face."

"And you say you never saw him or heard of him after that?"

"No, sir. I came over as soon as there was any light the next morning, but he was gone. There were tracks up to the back piazza, but I couldn't tell where they went to afterwards."

"Perhaps the man slept on the piazza that night?"

"It didn't look so, sir ; but perhaps he did," said Abner ; and the conversation was closed.

Later, Mr. Redfield asked him if he had opened

window or been in the house while left alone on the premises.

"No, sir," answered the boy promptly. "I just worked around as you told me. I hadn't any business to open a window."

"I believe you, Abner," responded the gentleman, and walked away without further comment.

Many people wondered at this confidence. Mr. Grimshaw found occasion to remark that there was every opportunity for a boy to do a large amount of small stealing.

Notwithstanding all this, however, Abner Hanson gained in the respect and esteem of his employer. He came in the morning, performed his allotted tasks faithfully, and returned home in the evening, having his board, in addition to his wages, after the family arrived.

With one member of the family, his uniform kindness and consideration soon made him a great favorite. Paul Redfield, the only son, had been so injured by a fall that he could not walk; and nothing so delighted him as to be drawn about the grounds by "good Abner," who moved so carefully, and took him to the very nicest places.

"When will you have a birthday?" he asked one afternoon, as he was resting in the shade, while Abner was at work not far away.

"Next week, Wednesday," was replied. "I shall be thirteen years old then."

"Why, I shall have a birthday then," exclaimed Paul. "I shall be six years old, and it is two whole years since I got hurt. The doctor said if I came into the country I should be getting stronger all the time, and I

do. Sometimes it seems as though I could almost step I wish I could. I want to go to school. Don't you?"

"I don't know. I never cared much about school, and I couldn't go now, if I wanted to. I must work every day, so as to take care of myself and help mother."

"Perhaps you are such a good scholar, you don't need to go, but I can only read and count. I can't do half as much as Lucy can, and she is only eight years old. Can you add figures, Abner?"

"Some; but I never went to school much, and when I did go, I didn't study as I ought to."

"Can you read real well?" continued Paul.

"No, I can't," answered the boy, who, perhaps for the first time, was ashamed of his ignorance.

"Then I guess you and I better read together sometimes. I have got some papers with real nice pictures and stories, and I know you would like them."

"But, you know, I must work. Your father pays me for working, and when I get through I must go home."

"What do you do Sundays?"

"Not much; only eat and sleep. Mr. Patten says I ought to go to meeting and Sunday-school; but my clothes aint fit, and, besides, I should be ashamed not to know any more. They study the Bible in Sunday-school, and I never studied it any. I wish I was more like other boys."

"So do I wish I was, and I hope I shall be sometime, but father says I must do the best I can just as I am, so I try. You come over here next Sunday afternoon, and we'll sit out here, if it is pleasant, and read the Bible together. Perhaps I can tell you something about it you don't know. You can wear the same clothes you

do every day, and we will make believe we are having a Sunday-school."

Again Abner Hanson took a step upwards, as he realized that there was a world far removed from that in which he had lived; and when allowed to carry some papers home, he thought himself rich indeed.

"There's something besides working with two hands and just earning a living," he said half aloud. "I'll find out what it is, too," he added more emphatically.

That evening he surprised his mother by calling for the Bible, and sitting up an hour later than usual puzzling over hard words and strange truths.

"I know now what makes the difference between folks," he remarked as he was about to retire. "Paul Redfield says we ought to live as the Bible tells us to. Some folks do, and some folks don't, and that makes the difference. Didn't you always know that, mother?"

"I suppose I did," answered the woman, who found it difficult to realize that the boy before her was truly her son.

He was impatient for Sunday; and when it arrived, wished the morning away that he might go to Mr. Redfield's to read with Paul, who had been encouraged by his parents to divide his store of books and papers with Abner. The little girls, too, thought of the pleasant boy who was always ready to help them, and wished to help him in return.

He was a poor reader, but Paul had patience with his blunders and his ignorance, so that he really made some progress in knowledge.

"Oh, dear! there is ever so much to be done, and only one head and one pair of hands to do it all," he

said, when it was time for him to go home. "I find out new things I want to do all the time."

"And I hope you will keep on finding them," responded Mr. Redfield, who had come out to see how the reading progressed. "Times are pretty hard when there is nothing new to be expected. You have made a good start in the world, for a poor boy, Abner. All you have to do now is to keep on working steadily, and remembering that the dear Lord cares for you. Will you remember that, my boy?"

"Yes, sir. Though I never knew much about it until Paul told me."

"I hope you will know more about it, and feel it, too. I didn't learn that blessed truth until I was several years older than you are. I had a harder life than you know anything about, yet through it all I had cause for thankfulness. I had good health, and after I went from here I was paid enough for my work to meet my expenses, although sometimes I was obliged to limit my expenses to a very small amount."

CHAPTER IV.

THE CURSE.

MR. FAULKNER, a gentleman who had been living West for several years, was visiting in his native town and inquired concerning the old tavern on the hill.

"It is owned by one who lived in the house between thirty and forty years ago," was replied to his question.

"It can not be one of the Martins," said Mr. Faulkner. "The old man died long ago, and his boys must be too poor and miserable, if they are alive, to own property anywhere. I haven't heard a word of them for twenty years, but there was a curse on the house, and especially on the Martin family."

"That is what everybody says," responded the man who had watched the fortunes of this house for half a century. "Every owner of the tavern has come to poverty and ruin. When Molly Briggs went there after her boy, and old Martin told her it was none of her business how much liquor he sold, she tried to reason with him. But when he swore he would sell her boy liquor if he had to do it over the mouth of hell, she cursed him until he trembled with fear. He kept his word, however, and Austen Briggs died a drunkard when he was less than thirty years old."

"No wonder the house is cursed. The wonder to me is that any one could be found to purchase it."

"It is a wonder, but the present owner came back

after having been away thirty-five years, and bought the whole estate, even to the mountain pastures. You remember that Zeke Redfield bound his boy Sam to old Martin, to pay a liquor bill."

"I do remember it, and I remember, too, that everybody was glad when he ran away. It can't be that he has bought the old tavern."

"He *has* bought it, and settled down there. The house has been thoroughly cleaned, painted and papered from garret to cellar, but with the exception of the bar-room, Mr. Redfield has made no other changes. He bought it cheap and paid cash down. There were not many who cared to bid against him when it went above what the land was worth, and for my part I am glad to have him back here. He is a good citizen, a Christian, and a thorough-going temperance man."

"He ought to be a temperance man. He saw enough liquor drinking when he was a boy, to make him hate it. I used to pity him. Old Martin was a hard master, and people who knew more about it than I did said that when the old man's sons were drunk they abused him worse than their father."

"There is no doubt of that. There were strange things done in that old tavern. More than one farm was mortgaged, when the owner had been drinking too freely and then sat down to a game of cards. More than one poor woman lost her home in a way she couldn't understand, and men found themselves in old Martin's power without knowing exactly how they came there. Molly Briggs was not alone in cursing house and landlord, and when he was sold out under the hammer, nobody pitied him."

“What became of his money?”

“It went for his boys. They were the worst kind of spendthrifts. They got into more scrapes than many people knew, and their father paid some heavy bills to prevent them from being shut up. Bill was the worst one, but so far as I know he has never been in prison. After their father became poor, the rest of them got their deserts behind the bars; and he would, if there hadn't been a woman to help him along. It is the most astonishing thing in the world, Mr. Faulkner, that such men often find women who cling to them through everything.”

“It is astonishing, Mr. Barker, and the worst feature of it all is, that children are born to them who are almost sure to inherit the father's depraved appetites. You say Bill Martin has a wife. Has he children?”

“You misunderstood me, Mr. Faulkner. I did not say he has a wife; for no one knows that he is married. We only know there is a woman living in the north part of the town who is ready to lay down her life for him. She is a good woman, too, in her way; the best nurse and the kindest neighbor anywhere 'round. If anybody is dangerously sick, the doctor always wants Eunice Poore to carry out his prescriptions; and if anybody is in trouble, she is ready with sympathy and help. She lives alone in a retired spot, and is never known to go from home except on business or to do somebody a kindness.”

“Has she money?”

“She earns a good deal, but she spends very little on herself. One winter she was away several weeks, and when she came back the stage driver thought she paid

him her last cent. She looked, too, as though she had exhausted her last strength. When she keeps closer than usual, the neighbors imagine Bill Martin is there, although no one ever sees him."

"Has she children?"

"Nobody here knows that she has, but I am sure if she had children, she would manage in some way to keep them under good influences. She believes in religion and in the strictest kind of temperance. She never misses an opportunity to speak against liquor-drinking; and as for the old tavern, it is the only place where she has refused to go where there was sickness."

"Is she a native of the town?"

"No, sir; she came here not long after you left and bought the place she lives on, taking the deed in her own name. Though people thought Bill Martin furnished the money to pay for it."

"So you have a romance in this quiet old town, Mr. Barker?"

"More of a tragedy than a romance, Mr. Faulkner, and the worst may be to come. You remember about the peddler who was found dead in the snow, thirty-six years ago come next winter?"

"I do remember it. There must have been foul play somewhere. No sane man would leave a comfortable shelter, such a night as that was, unless he was driven to it."

"It aint reasonable to suppose he would, but nobody could prove anything, and to this day no trace has been found of the money or papers his wife said he carried in a belt under his clothing. Within a few years a large reward has been offered for the papers. If they could

be found the peddler's heirs would come in for a fortune. There is a mystery about the whole affair, but I believe Bill Martin could clear up part of it."

"He will be likely to keep his own counsel, unless there is a great deal to be gained by making a clean breast of it. Sam Redfield was living with Martin at the time of the peddler's death. What does he say about it?"

"I don't know that any one has mentioned it to him since he came back; but I remember distinctly that he was at his father's then. Martin sent him over there in the morning just as the storm began, and told him not to come back until the next day in the afternoon."

"That looked suspicious."

"It did, a little; although Sam's mother was sick and needed him."

"I wonder he wanted to come back here to live. I should think he would have preferred almost any other place."

"It seems he did not. He says when he decided to move into the country, he thought of this place the very first thing; and when he found the old tavern was for sale, he determined to buy it."

"And he is not afraid of the curse?"

"No, sir; why should he be? It was liquor that cursed the house, and not a drop will ever be seen there as long as he occupies it. He does not talk much of what he intends to do, but everybody who sees him understands that he has a mind of his own. He is going to farming, and he has some good stock in his barns; some of the best there is in town. It will pay you to give him a call. He don't say much about old times,

but he is glad to see anybody who remembers him. The town has improved since you left it, Mr. Faulkner."

"Yes, sir; it has. The farms look better, and the farmers are living in better houses. I don't believe there are as many drunkards in town as there were then."

"Not nearly so many, Mr. Faulkner. The old ones have died off, and since the old tavern got such a bad name, the young men have kept away from it more than they used to. If there had never been a tavern here, we should be a good deal richer in men as well as money. Liquor has been the curse of all our farming towns, and the old-fashioned taverns did a big business in making drunkards."

CHAPTER V.

THE STRANGE NURSE.

"IF you have a mind to go to school this winter, you can work enough to pay for your board ; and if you do more than that, I will pay you every cent which is your due," said Mr. Redfield to Abner Hanson, as the days grew shorter and colder.

"Thank you, sir. I wish I could go to school, but mother needs all I can earn," answered the boy. "I am studying a little evenings, and must do the best I can without school. I could read only a little when Paul began with me, and now mother says I read very well. I am trying arithmetic, too. My sister Hattie goes to school, and she tells me about the lessons. That is why I would rather go home nights, if you are willing."

"I am perfectly willing ; only it is pretty hard for you to start so early these frosty mornings."

"I can do it, Mr. Redfield. It is better for the children to have me at home evenings. I want them to come up different from what I did."

"That is a good thought, Abner. Look out for your brothers and sisters."

"I mean to, sir ; and they are trying to do as well as they can. They are always so glad to see me evenings, I forget how tired I am. Mother calls me her good boy. So you see it helps all round for me to go,

home, and it does me good to think I can be such a helper."

'You are a helper here, too, Abner. Paul would hardly know how to get through a day without you. I expect you will be a friend to him as long as you live. I don't know another boy I would trust him with as I do with you. He has grown stronger since we came here, and another summer I expect he will begin to walk again. If he can only take the first step, all will come right in time.'

Abner Hanson had never, in all his life, received a Christmas present; but this Christmas eve so many bundles and boxes and baskets were left at his mother's, each directed to some member of the family, that his little sister said "Santa Claus must have emptied his sleigh at their door." She didn't know that, for weeks, the children in the old tavern had been planning a surprise for them; but Abner guessed at once to whom they were indebted.

"Were the things just exactly what you wanted?" asked Paul, the next day, when he attempted to express his gratitude.

"Just exactly," was replied. "Why, I felt so rich, I didn't want to go to sleep at all last night, and mother was so glad she cried. Since she began to read the Bible, same as your father and mother do, she is like a new mother. I am glad your father came here to live and let me work for him. I hope I can do something real hard for him sometime, to show him how much I thank him for being so good to me. And to think that once he was poorer than I ever was! I mean to be just as near like him, when I grow up, as I can."

Christmas was a happy day for Abner Hanson, but New Year's was still happier. Mrs. Hanson and her family were invited to dine at Mr. Redfield's, and, while there, they were made to feel so entirely at home, they half forgot the strangeness of their position.

Paul was in jubilant spirits—the very life of the company; making friends with all, and winning all hearts not already his. The next day he complained of being tired; the next, his head ached; and the next, he was so ill that Dr. Farrar was summoned, who pronounced him in the first stages of brain fever.

At the same time, the girl in the kitchen was obliged to go home because of her mother's illness, thus leaving Mrs. Redfield without help.

“Eunice Poore is just the woman you need, and fortunately she is at home,” said Dr. Farrar, when he understood the situation.

“It seems to me I would rather have any one else in my house,” responded Mr. Redfield. “Her connection with Bill Martin makes her particularly obnoxious to me. You probably do not understand why this should be; but I have good reason to avoid anything which may possibly bring me into the most distant relation with the Martin family.”

“I know something of your early life, Mr. Redfield, and do not wonder that you have such feelings; but, for all that, I should feel surer of your boy's recovery if Eunice Poore was in the house. She is a poor, unfortunate woman; yet there never was one more faithful to the trusts reposed in her. I believe she is Bill Martin's wife, and really his slave; but I am sure you can trust her.”

Mr. Redfield consulted with his wife, and they decided not to send for this woman. Mrs. Hanson came over and gave them what assistance she could. Other neighbors, too, were ready to assist them ; yet, as the boy grew steadily worse, all recommended Eunice.

"She can do better for your child than you can," said one lady to the tired mother. "I have seen her take a baby in her arms and hush it to sleep, when nobody else could quiet it for a moment. The best thing you can do, Mrs. Redfield, is to send for her at once. She can do anything you need to have done."

Dr. Farrar, whose advice had been unheeded at the outset, now repeated it, and Abner Hanson was dispatched for Eunice Poore.

It was a long, cold drive, and for the last half mile before reaching the lonely house, the road was unbroken. Curtains were close drawn, and but for the smoke issuing from the chimney, he would have thought the cottage untenanted. He rapped on the door, and after some delay Eunice Poore appeared and listened to his errand without inviting him in.

"I can not go," she said decidedly. "I have been out so much that I must stay at home for a while now."

These words had hardly been spoken, when a sharp bark, as of an angry dog, called her attention, and asking Abner to wait for a moment, she stepped back into an inner room, shutting the door carefully behind her. The boy, who waited, did not hear a sound ; yet he was sure that she consulted hastily with some one, before returning to tell him that she had changed her mind, and would be ready to go with him in ten minutes.

It was but for an instant, yet the scarred face, of

which Abner Hanson caught a single glimpse, as he turned his horse, could not have been an optical illusion. Evidently the woman suspected he had seen too much, and watched him narrowly, yet she forbore to ask him any questions. Indeed, she did not speak during the drive to the old tavern, where, after being told what was expected of her, she began her work.

Mr. and Mrs. Redfield could not leave their suffering child. Abner Hanson had sometimes relieved them by caring for him while they rested for a short time, where they could see all that transpired. He had seemed to recognize his friends; but as the disease progressed he became wholly unconscious, moaning, and turning restlessly.

Then Eunice Poore was called from the kitchen to the sick room, and asked to try her skill. She looked at the child for a moment, as if considering what was best to be done, then took him quietly in her arms, and commenced crooning a soft lullaby, while she paced the floor with slow and measured steps.

Dr. Farrar came in, glanced at her approvingly, and left the room without speaking. When followed by Mr. Redfield, he said:

“Leave your boy with Eunice. She will know if I can do any good. If he can sleep to-night there will be a chance for him; otherwise, you must be prepared to give him up. That woman has a power I don’t understand, and if anybody can save your child, she can.”

The hours went by, yet the measured steps did not falter. The shaven head moved less restlessly, and the moans of the sufferer grew fainter; but there was no break in the soothing lullaby. At length the moaning

ceased altogether, and the head rested quietly upon the arm which seemed not to grow weary.

Midnight came, and when the clock ceased striking, Eunice Poore laid the child upon his bed and sank into a chair beside him. Not then, however, was her work ended. She watched him through the entire night, giving him towards morning, a little nourishment, prepared according to her own directions.

When Dr. Farrar came in, he pronounced his patient so far out of danger that it was safe to predict recovery.

“Eunice will bring him through,” said the physician confidently. “I will look into see how he is getting along, but she can manage his case now.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE MYSTERY.

WHATEVER might be Eunice Poore's relations with Bill Martin, she had gained the confidence of Samuel Redfield. She had, with the blessing of God, saved the life of his only son, and his gratitude was unbounded. He had paid her higher wages than she asked, or was willing to accept, and also assured her that she could count upon his friendship in time of need.

With him and his wife she had talked little beyond what was necessary in regard to her duties; but she had strangely interested and entertained Paul, who insisted upon calling her Aunt Eunice. When she was about to leave him, he won from her a promise that she would come again; and when she had really gone, he grieved at her absence.

"There is something wrong with Eunice Poore," said Dr. Farrar to Mr. Redfield not long afterward. "I went to her house, yesterday, but no one came to the door when I rapped, although I knew there must be some one in the house. I tried all the doors, and then called loudly; thinking, perhaps, if she knew who was there, she would make some response. At last she spoke, telling me how to open the shed door, and asking me to come in.

"I found her lying on a lounge in the kitchen, looking

as though she had been sick for a month. Her head was bound up and one wrist was bandaged. She tried to make light of her condition ; saying she had fallen down the cellar stairs and got some bruises ; hit her head against a stone, and sprained her wrist ; but she should soon be all right.

“ I urged her to let me look at her wrist, and finally she consented. It was well she did, too, for it needed a surgeon’s hand. I was very anxious to see her head, but she absolutely refused that. I knew, by the sharp lines of her face, that she was suffering keenly, but she would not admit it. She said she had plenty of cooked food, and was quite able to take care of herself ; so I had no choice but to leave her. She may have fallen down the cellar stairs ; but I have my own theory as to the cause of the fall.”

“ What is it, doctor ? ”

“ Bill Martin has been here. I heard, not long ago, he had been arrested for stealing, and managed in some way to get clear by the payment of money ; and whenever he is in trouble, he comes to Eunice Poore for concealment and help. If she offended him, he would as soon push her down the cellar stairs as do anything else.”

“ He is a wretch ; and since I have seen Eunice Poore, I wonder more and more how she can care for him in any way.”

“ It is one of the mysteries of human nature, Mr. Redfield. Bill Martin is wicked enough for anything. People think he has made several attempts to enter this house at different times. Have you ever seen him prowling about here ? ”

“ Never. Why should he wish to enter this house more than any other ? ”

"I don't know, unless there is money concealed somewhere on the premises."

"If there had been, you may be sure some of the Martin family would have found it long before this time. Old Martin had plenty of money when I lived with him; but money gained in the way he gained his takes to itself wings. I have never seen Bill Martin since I left his father, and I hope I never *shall* see him."

Abner Hanson had not told Mr. Redfield of the face at the window; but when asked if he had caught sight again of the man he had once found in the garden, he answered quickly:

"I am not sure, sir; but if I have, he was in Eunice Poore's shed. I thought I saw the same scarred face, but it was gone so quick, I could not be certain."

"Tell me, if you ever think you see it again."

"Yes, sir, I will," replied Abner; suspecting who the man might be.

Months went by without further allusion to the Martin family, except when some one remarked upon the improvements which had been made in and about the old tavern.

Paul Redfield not only regained his usual health, but under treatment, first recommended by Eunice Poore, and afterward endorsed by Dr. Farrar, he was beginning to walk, with the aid of crutches. Gradually he dispensed with these helps; so that, before winter, he was able to move about at his pleasure. This was cause for great rejoicing, and also the occasion of frequent remarks that the curse had departed from the house, although there was a mystery still unsolved.

Late in the autumn, near the close of a delightful In-

dian summer day, two gentlemen drove up to the door, asking entertainment for the night.

"This is a public house; is it not?" said one.

"No, sir," replied Mr. Redfield courteously. "It *was* a public house for more than fifty years; but, as you see, the sign has been taken down, and it is now a private residence. I occupy it with my family."

"Your pardon, sir, but I supposed the house was still open to the public. I have heard so much of it, that I was anxious to see it, and thought I would spend the night here; but of course I shall drive on."

Still the gentleman lingered; until, at last he asked abruptly:

"Did you know the place thirty-six or seven years ago?"

"Yes, sir, I did," was replied.

"You must have been a boy at that time, but do you remember when Mr. Larabee, the peddler, was found, frozen to death?"

"I remember it as distinctly as if it had occurred yesterday."

"A man by the name of Martin was landlord here then."

"Yes, sir, and I was general chore-boy here then, indoors and out, in kitchen and in stable."

"And you knew Mr. Larabee."

"Yes, sir; he used to come around this part of the country two or three times a year. He gave me the first piece of silver money I ever had, and told me to keep it for luck."

"And did you keep it?"

"Yes, sir. I was poor enough afterward, and near enough to starving, but I didn't let my shilling go."

"Did you see him here, the day before he was found dead?"

"No, sir; I went home early in the morning. There came a terrible snow storm that blocked the roads, so I could not return as soon as I intended. But, if you know anything about the circumstances of Mr. Larabee's death, you have heard of that storm."

"Yes, sir, I have, and I wish I could hear more. I would pay a large sum for the papers Mr. Larabee carried with him, and which, it seems to me, must have been taken from him before he left this house."

"I know people thought so; although, boy as I was, I did not understand the significance of all I saw and heard. A great deal of liquor was sold and drank here, and a man who had money was likely to leave some of it behind him when he left. But for all that, I have heard that old Martin died as poor as a beggar."

"He *was* a beggar, sir. A more wretched creature you never saw; and if he had not been so closely watched by one of his sons, I believe he would have confessed to what he knew of Larabee. Every effort was made to induce him to do so, but he feared his son, who, I have no doubt, was implicated in the affair."

"Had the son a scar across his left cheek?"

"Yes, sir; and a hideous scar too. I think he was the most ferocious looking man I ever met, and I am inclined to the opinion that he is as black a villain. He has managed, thus far, to elude justice, but he is not a man to die in his bed."

CHAPTER VII.

THE PROMISE.

WHEN Abner Hanson was eighteen years of age, no one would have recognized him as the boy who had begged so earnestly for the privilege of taking care of himself and helping his mother. Even Mr. Grimshaw had ceased to prophesy evil of him, while those who knew him best counted him a marvel of honest, persistent energy.

He had not attended school a single day, yet he was sufficiently well educated to transact any ordinary business in a creditable manner. His uniform good nature and kindness won for him a cordial welcome wherever he went, and made him quite a favorite with both old and young.

Up to this time he had been content to work for Mr. Redfield; doing faithfully what was set for him to do. But soon after his eighteenth birth-day it was his fortune to render a stranger a service, the result of which changed the entire course of his life.

“I want just such a young man as I judge you to be, to work for me,” said the stranger, adding: “I will pay you well, to begin with, and increase your salary from year to year, if I am not disappointed in you, and I don’t believe I shall be. If I send for you, will you come to me?”

"If you send for me, I will think of it," answered Abner cautiously.

"I can give good references as to character and ability to fulfill my engagements," responded the gentleman with a smile; and soon the references came in the advertising columns of a leading newspaper.

These were followed quickly by a letter, in which Mr. Conrad made a definite proposal to Abner Hanson to enter his employ.

"You could not have a better chance for getting on in the world," said Mr. Redfield, who was consulted. "Mr. Conrad's name is a guaranty for his word, and he offers you higher wages than I can afford to pay you."

"Then you would advise me to accept his offer," was responded.

"I certainly should, if I was sure that you are strong enough to resist temptation."

"Temptation to what?" asked the young man.

"Temptation to take a social glass with those you may be sorry to offend by a refusal. I have never talked to you about it, but you and I must be teetotallers or be ruined."

"Yes, sir, I know, and I will never taste a drop of liquor of any kind, so help me God. Do you think, Mr. Redfield, I could be so weak and foolish as to throw away my chances for this world and another?"

"Abner, I have never had reason to think you weak or foolish, but you have never yet been tempted, as you certainly will be if you accept Mr. Conrad's offer. If you go to the city, you will be surrounded with new associations and new influences."

"Yes, sir, I suppose I shall be, but the same God wil'

be over me ; and, Mr. Redfield, I believe I can say no, strong enough to be understood. I am sorry to leave you all, and sorry to leave my mother, but I think it will be best for me to go."

Having reached this decision, the young man was not long in making his preparations. Paul Redfield protested against losing his friend, but protests were of no avail. The die was cast, and Abner Hanson bade adieu to the scenes of his childhood.

If he suffered from home sickness, he made no complaint. Mr. Conrad was satisfied with him, and he was doing his best to become familiar with his duties. Other young men invited him to join them in their "jolly times," ridiculing him for his Puritanical notions ; but he did not find it difficult to convince them of his indifference to their ridicule. He never loitered over his work, or delayed in its performance.

At the end of a year he was given a short vacation which he spent at home ; and then it was that, for the third time, he saw the scarred face of Bill Martin.

While out for a ramble through the woods, he found himself near Eunice Poore's cottage, and going up to it, on the side most screened from observation, this face appeared to him through an open window.

Startled by the sight, and unwilling to see more, he hastened away, and had gone some distance when a familiar voice called to him.

"Wait, until I can talk," gasped the woman who had walked so rapidly that it was with difficulty she could speak at all ; and sitting down, her breath came thick and fast, as she pressed her hand against her heart. "You must promise me never to say that you saw any one but myself in my house," she at length whispered hoarsely.

"I cannot promise that," was replied. "I have promised Mr. Redfield I would tell him if I ever saw that man again."

"What does he want to know for?" asked Eunice Poore in an excited tone.

"I don't know," answered the young man. "He asked me to tell him, and I promised I would. So I must, I can not break my word."

"Oh, what shall I do!" cried the wretched woman. "He will kill me, and —— But I am talking wildly. Don't mind me, I have been having such a terrible headache, it has made me almost crazy. Of course, I am not afraid of being killed. Who would want to injure me! But, Abner, it will do no good to tell Mr. Redfield. I will see that he is never injured. He has promised to be my friend in time of need."

"Then trust him, Eunice. He will keep his word. He never fails. I must tell him what I have seen, and I will tell him anything else you wish me to."

"It can't do any hurt to break this promise, Abner."

"It would hurt me, and I should never dare look Mr. Redfield in the face again. I never told him a lie yet, and I can not."

"Don't say it, Abner," cried the woman, seizing his hand. "You wouldn't if you knew all. There are worse things than breaking your promise. Think, Abner, I did my best for Paul Redfield, and Dr. Farrar says I saved his life. "Oh, my God, what a life mine has been," she added after a short silence. "A drunken father, drunken brothers, and now——, Abner, the man you saw saved my life. My father would have killed me if he had not interfered. I owe him something for that;

and now other people are against him, he has a right to expect me to do what I can for him. How can I go back home, unless you promise what I want you to? I might better die."

Again she interrupted herself, seeking to efface the impression made by her last remark. Half maddened with fear and anxiety, she had lost her usual self-control.

Abner Hanson pitied her as he had never pitied any person before. She was pleading as for her life, and now, in her agony, she clutched him by the arm and held him fast.

"Promise me not to tell Mr. Redfield for three days," she sobbed at last.

"I promise," he answered. "I will not even tell any one that I have seen you. If I can help you in any way I shall be glad to do it. Why must you live on as you have been living?"

"Because I must. I am bound to my life as it is, and no one can help me. Sometime it will all be over and I shall rest. It has not been so happy that I should care to prolong it, yet I am not ready to die. My mother taught me that there is another world beyond this. Do you believe it, Abner?"

"Yes, I do, Eunice. The Bible says so, and the Bible is true."

"The Bible says, too, that no drunkard can enter the kingdom of Heaven. How many belonging to me must be shut out, and I with the rest!"

"You are not——."

"I am not a drunkard, Abner. I would not taste of liquor, to save the man you saw in my house. I hate it with my whole being. Abner, as you value your soul, never taste a single drop."

"I never will; I never have."

"But your time has not come. You are poor, now; but when you are rich, and you meet beautiful women who ask you to pledge them in the wine cup; then will be your time of trial. Then beware. Such as you can not stop with a glass."

"I know that. Mr. Redfield has talked with me about it and I have promised him."

"That is well. But he will need to look sharp after Paul, and you must be the boy's friend. He will need all the safeguards he can have. He will be more easily influenced than you. I am a poor woman, without friends or a name, but what touches Paul Redfield touches me. I have loved many children, but I have loved only one other as I love him. He must not learn to despise me, as he grows older. That would be too much for me to bear."

"He will not learn to despise you. Every one in his father's house respects and esteems you, and any friend of yours is safe from harm by them."

"Do you believe that? Do you *know* it?"

"I know it, and while I can not break my word for you, I *pledge* you my word that no harm shall come to you or yours because of anything I shall say to Mr. Redfield."

"Then go and leave me to my fate, and in the hour of temptation remember what I have said to you."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REVELATION.

How it fared with Eunice Poore after her interview with Abner Hanson, no one knew, save God, herself, and the man whose anger she had so feared.

The years went by, leaving their impress upon her as well as upon others. Her strength was failing, and as she earned less, people suspected that, when at home, she sometimes suffered for the want of sufficient food. As Dr. Farrar was supposed to know more of her condition than any one else, he was often interrogated in regard to her, but even he could not speak with certainty.

"I am sure she is suffering, and yet she will not acknowledge it or allow me to help her," said Mrs. Redfield to the good doctor.

"She *is* suffering and she needs help," was replied. "I am sure of that, and it is my opinion she is dying by inches. She ought to be well taken care of in some comfortable home, and not be living alone in that out-of-the-way place. I expect she will be found there, dead. She has changed fearfully within the last few months.

"She seems to have lost her interest in everybody about here, except your family and Abner Hanson. She

always inquires for you and him whenever I see her. She asks a great many questions about Paul. She will never lose her interest in him."

"He would like to visit her, but she has never asked him to do so."

"She never invites company, Mrs. Redfield, but she says she wishes to see Abner Hanson when he comes. She has great respect for him, and I think she would talk with him more frankly than with any one else. I don't know why, but when I told her he would be here his twenty-fourth birthday, she said: 'Tell him to come to my house.'"

Abner Hanson's home visits were always occasions of rejoicing to all who knew him. Mr. Patten and Mr. Redfield watched his career with both pride and pleasure; while there was not a poor boy in town who did not take courage from his example.

"What do you do when you are invited to take a social glass with a friend?" asked Mr. Patten, as they were conversing in a familiar way.

"Refuse, of course," was replied.

"And is one refusal sufficient, Abner?"

"Yes, sir; I can say no, so that I am understood the first time. It is easy enough. I have never been really tempted to drink a glass of liquor in my life. I have been asked to do so many times, but my mind is so firmly made up that all the asking is no temptation to me. There is everything in being decided; in having a principle and letting people know it. When a house is builded upon a rock, the winds may blow and the floods may come, but the house will stand firm. Thank God, I have a sure foundation which can not be moved. It is more

than eleven years, Mr. Patten, since I determined to do the best I could, and——”

“You have done it.”

“I have tried. I have made some mistakes, but they were faults of my head rather than of my heart; and, please God, I mean to keep on doing my best.”

Abner had not forgotten Eunice Poore, or ceased to regard her with friendly interest; so that, when told she wished to see him, he made no delay in calling upon her. The door stood ajar; the windows were open, and the curtains were looped back, to admit air and sunshine. The owner of the cottage was at home and alone, glad to see her visitor, and welcoming him with a cordiality quite unusual to her.

“I thought it was about time for you to come, and hoped you would remember me,” she said, with an effort to speak cheerfully. “I suppose the fatted calf has been killed for you.”

“I am not a returning prodigal,” he answered. “I have not wasted my substance in riotous living, and afterward fed upon husks.”

“No, you have not, Abner. How happy your friends must be to know it. It is dreadful to be always fearing and doubting for those you love best. There can’t many people feel that as I do. You won’t see a scarred face here, now, so you will have nothing to tell Mr. Redfield.”

“What I told him did no harm.”

“I don’t know as it did, only it has been all harm to me from beginning to end; and the end is almost here. Abner Hanson, I shall not live a year.”

Here she paused, turning away and covering her face with her hands. There was no sound of sobbing, but

when she again addressed her companion there were traces of tears upon her cheeks.

"I did not mean to tell you that, at first, but it was uppermost in my thoughts, and it is a relief, sometimes, to tell your troubles. But you must not repeat it."

"I hope you are mistaken in thinking you shall die so soon," said the young man.

"I am not; I have seen too much of sickness to be mistaken."

"But the doctor might help you."

"I am beyond his help. I must die. I don't know why I chose you to hear what I must say to some one I can trust, but it seemed to me it would be wiser to talk to you than to any one else. I know I can trust you."

"You can."

"And you will carry out my wishes?"

"I will, so far as I can without injuring others."

"I shall not ask you to do that; but, Abner, you will not betray a man who has only a few years to live."

"I will not, unless it is necessary to serve a better man."

"I won't ask more than that. There has been wickedness enough. I never helped him in that, though I have helped him to get clear of punishment. I have worked and slaved for that man thirty years, and now I am dying for him. I can't tell you how it was. I wonder at it myself; but the man is my husband. We were married by a minister, and I have as good a right to my husband's name as any other woman has to hers."

"Then, why were you not called by it?"

"I can't tell you why, and it wouldn't do any good if I could. He furnished the money to pay for this house and

land, and when I am gone it will belong to him. I want to leave everything just as it is ; so if he ever comes back he can have a home. Perhaps he won't come. I don't know."

Abner Hanson found it difficult to reply to this woman's confidence. He could only say, as he had said before, that she could trust him, and he would be happy to serve her in any way that he could. At length he asked if she would not be likely to see her husband within a few months.

"He is in prison for three years," she responded. "I couldn't help him. It is the first time I ever failed him, and he was sentenced for three years. I have written a long letter, hoping you would give it to him when he comes out. It will be some trouble and expense to you, and I wish I could pay you for it ; but I have only money enough left for my funeral expenses. After working so hard, I can't bear to think of being buried like a pauper. I will tell you where my husband is."

"I will see him and give him the letter, as you desire," said Abner, when he had received the necessary instructions for so doing.

"And will you speak a kind word to him for my sake ?" asked the woman pleadingly.

"I will, and if I can do a kind act for him it shall be done."

"I can not tell you how much I thank you," she responded, and after that avoided any further allusion to her husband.

They talked of Mr. Redfield's family, of Abner's mother, and lastly, of himself and his prospects ; which,

he assured her, were all and better than he had presumed to expect.

“You have not been tempted above what you were able to bear?”

“I have not.”

“Has a beautiful woman ever asked you to drink wine with her?”

“Never.”

“Then your hour has not come. When it does come, as it certainly will, remember that I have warned you; and may God bless you for ever and ever.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE POOR-HOUSE.

As Dr. Farrar had expected, Eunice Poore was found dead in her house. She had died alone, leaving no clew to her life before she had become the wife of William Martin.

Those who came to perform for her the last sad offices were startled at the preparations she had herself made. They had but to open a drawer, and there lay every article which would be required in their work. Dainty garments, too, they were, all unlike those to which she had been accustomed in her poverty.

"Here is her marriage certificate," said a woman softly. "She must have put it here, so that we might see it. Poor soul! She wanted us to think as well of her as we could when she was gone."

"Yes, yes, but come here," replied another, who had been engaged in disrobing the dead body.

For a moment they stood horror-stricken at the sight which met their gaze. Eunice Poore had died by inches, of slow torture such as no words can describe. A heavy blow had produced an injury which, after various stages of development, had resulted in her death.

"And we never dreamed what she was suffering," re-

marked one. "It makes me shudder to think what she had to bear. No wonder she stayed at home. Is it possible that Dr. Farrar knew?"

He did not *know*, but he had *suspected* what was now proved to be true ; and he had tried to win the woman's confidence. Refusing this, and trusting to her own skill, she had seen one day go by after another, until for her the last one dawned.

Many were the expressions of pity for her who had so cruelly suffered, and many were the tears shed in that lonely house over her unhappy fate.

In a Bible which lay on a small stand in the kitchen was an open letter directed to Mr. Redfield, and enclosing a sealed message to Paul. This was delivered as soon as possible, after which the gentleman assumed the responsibility of arranging for the funeral.

On the day appointed a large concourse of people assembled to pay their tribute of respect to one who had, for so many years, gone in and out among them as a trusted servant. The officiating clergyman, who had found it impossible to converse with her upon the subject of religion, said he was thankful to know that in the loneliness and darkness of her last days, Mrs. Martin had looked to the Source of all light and comfort ; and trusting in One mighty to save, had laid down her burdens at the foot of the cross. In confirmation of this, he read an extract from the open letter, in which she expressed her faith in God, and the assurance that her sins were forgiven.

It was well that she was at rest, beyond the reach of him who had doomed her to isolation and misery ; yet she would be missed in many a household, where her

presence had been as a tower of strength in the hour of trial.

Again the fortunes of the Martin family were the topics of conversation throughout the town. Old people compared notes ; refreshing each other's memory, and prophesying that the time would come when all mysteries would be explained. In the poor-house, among the paupers, were those whose property had been sacrificed over the bar and the card tables in the old tavern, and who were bitter in their denunciations of its landlords.

"Zeke Redfield wa'n't half so bad as folks tried to make him out," remarked one. "Old Martin took advantage of him every way ; and when he took out the papers, binding Sam to the old man, there was a sheriff ready to serve a writ on him and take him to jail if he hadn't done it."

"All that may be, but it was the liquor that did the business, Uncle Sam. You and I know that. If we hadn't drank it, we shouldn't be here now."

"I know it, and sometimes when I get to thinking about it, it makes me 'most crazy. But then we deserve to be punished. We brought it on ourselves. It was hardest on the women who couldn't help themselves. There was Polly Barnes. You remember her, don't you?"

"I guess I do. I aint likely to forget her. She was the handsomest girl, to me, I ever saw. She was smart, too, and chipper as a bird. I'm an old man now, but I can remember how happy I was when she let me go home with her one night. She ought to have had somebody to take good care of her."

"She thought she had. Everybody spoke well of An

son Haynes. He was very temperate, and I never could understand how he got to drinking as he did."

"I can tell you about that, Uncle Lem. Tom Martin wanted Polly himself, but she wouldn't have anything to say to him; and he swore he would have his revenge. He set to work to make a drunkard of Anson Haynes, and he succeeded. The night Polly went to the tavern after her husband, Tom talked so bad to her, his father told him to shut up."

"I was there that night, and if I ever wanted to give a man a horse-whipping, I did then. But Tom got his deserts when he was imprisoned for life. He will have plenty of time to think over his evil deeds. People say he has a family somewhere."

"Well for them he is shut up."

"So it is; though when he was a small boy, folks thought he favored his mother, and she was a good woman. Bill was the old man over again, and Thankful didn't seem to belong among them any way. After her mother died the poor girl just faded away."

"Yes, I remember about it now. I haint thought of her for a good many years; but Eunice Poore's dying, and knowing she was Bill's wife, has brought it all back to me. Thankful was a nice girl, and they said Tom was as good to her, when she was sick, as he knew how to be."

"If Tom had let liquor alone he might have been a decent man. I don't know but Jim might too. You can't always tell how much difference liquor makes with a man. It has made the difference between a good home and the poor-house with me. If I could live my life over again, there wouldn't a cent of my money go into the rum-seller's till. No wonder old Martin got rich."

“No wonder he got poor either. He never had any mercy on anybody he once got into his clutches. I used to pity Sam Redfield, and when he came here the other day, as first selectman, to look after us paupers, it hurt me more than anything that has happened since I lost my farm.”

“It was pretty hard on us, but he didn’t set up to be any better than we are. They say he never tasted a drop of liquor in his life. Abner Hanson haint either, and they are the two smartest men ever raised in town. I expect Abner will be the richest.”

“That’s what I expect, too, and we might, both of us, have been well-off if we had kept away from the old tavern.”

CHAPTER X.

THE TEMPTATION.

A MONTH'S vacation was a new experience to Abner Hanson ; but harder work and closer application were before him, and Mr. Conrad advised a long rest. Two weeks he spent in his native town, and then went to the seaside for recreation, and, as he said, to see something of summer society.

He was twenty-six years of age, and yet, so busy had he been with every day's duties and plans for self-improvement, that he was still heart whole. When a poor clerk, with a small salary, he received few invitations to take him from his evening studies, but now that he was known as a rising man, likely to make his mark in the business world, there were many to smile upon him,

Mr. and Mrs. Conrad invited him to their house, where he caught some glimpses of fashionable life ; yet, as there were no young people in the family, there was little of real gayety. In the city he had studied books and business ; at the seaside he studied men and women.

Not a trace of awkwardness revealed his want of early training. He was hardly in danger of offending against the most fastidious rules of etiquette, so that he was quite at ease wherever he might be.

The hotel at which he registered his name was thronged

with guests, among whom were some who knew him to stand high in Mr. Conrad's esteem, and who therefore cultivated his acquaintance. He was introduced to beautiful girls and charming women, who received him graciously.

Among the former was Belle Boyd, brilliant, attractive, and knowing well how to win admiration from those she counted worthy of her favor. Abner Hanson pleased her fancy; perhaps because he was so unlike her ordinary admirers.

He had some purpose in life. He was strong to overcome obstacles in his path toward success, and, if need be, extend a helping hand to others.

He had no accomplishments. He could not dance, or sing, or play billiards. He never touched a pack of cards. He could not talk learnedly of the comparative merits of different kinds of liquors.

He attended church regularly; was a teacher in the Sunday-school, and a professing Christian, whose life indorsed his profession. All this, however, did not make him a less agreeable companion to the young lady, who found his sincerity and hearty enjoyment of simple pleasures strangely fascinating.

"What have you been doing all your life?" she asked him one day, when he had acknowledged his ignorance of some idle amusement.

"Working," he replied pleasantly. "I have had no time to amuse myself, or even to feel the need of being amused."

"That is the most amusing part of it," she responded, with a laugh, the music of which would haunt him who heard it for days. "It is really refreshing to meet some one who does not need to be amused."

The tone in which this was said gave to the words a significance peculiarly their own, and not to be lost upon him to whom they were addressed. Others talked of the flirtation between Mr. Hanson and Belle Boyd, but he, surely, was not flirting.

Two weeks passed all too quickly, bringing the hour of parting, when he blamed himself for the wish to linger longer, although he knew that duty called him elsewhere. He had not cared to analyze his feelings, or consider seriously the character of one he had found so pleasant a companion.

He hoped to meet her again in the coming winter, when she was to visit some friends in the same city with himself; and this hope sometimes reached beyond the immediate future.

He was not disappointed in his expectations. The young lady apprised him of her presence, and when he made an early call, he was received most graciously by her hostess, as well as by herself.

He was her escort to concerts, lectures, and other entertainments which did not conflict with his principles. He met her at parties, where she was the recipient of most flattering attentions, and still she showed him a marked preference.

In all this intercourse he saw nothing to lessen his regard for her, although he half questioned whether she was, indeed, the ideal woman he had dreamed he would, one day, enshrine in his heart and home. Questioning, however, was almost at an end, when, after an evening in which his refusal to take wine had made him really conspicuous, she asked him if he never tasted of wine.

“Never,” he replied.

"Under some circumstances you could hardly refuse," she responded.

"Under any and all circumstances I should refuse," answered Abner Hanson.

"I may put you to the test," said the young lady laughingly, and then, observing her companion's serious manner, she changed the subject of conversation.

It was not long before he had reason to recall this laughing menace. In a crowded supper-room Belle Boyd challenged him to drink her health, with an air of assurance which seemed to admit of no denial. His face flushed, but he declined the honor.

"You will not drink to my health?" she said in a tone of mingled surprise and reproach.

"I will not taste of wine to please even you," he answered under his breath.

"You are no loyal knight, Mr. Hanson, if you refuse a lady so small a favor. How can you be so recreant?"

"I *can*, because I *will*," and these words were only whispered.

Chagrined, and yet determined not to betray her discomfiture, she was soon sipping wine with the most elegant man in the room. To Abner Hanson's dismay and indignation, he saw that another had yielded to her wiles. Giles Morgan, too, the last man who should have thus yielded, and he waited to see the end. He thought of Eunice Poore, and thanked God for the warning which had not lost its power.

He was safe, but Giles Morgan was in danger. One glass did not suffice for the appetite which had only slumbered. Even the temptress shuddered at the result of her thoughtless act, and which, but for one who had

proved himself a true and loyal knight, without fear and without reproach, would have been more disastrous. Without seeking their hostess, Abner Hanson led the excited man from the company.

"I hoped Giles Morgan had learned more of self-control," said a lady standing near. "He has been doing splendidly for the last two years, but it is all over with him now. No one can tell where he will stop."

"Is it possible that he has ever been dissipated?" was asked in response to these remarks.

"Certainly he has been," was replied. "He went down so low, that his family quite ignored him, except for a sister who clung to him through everything, determined to save him in spite of himself. It will be a terrible blow to her when she knows of his fall."

But it was no time to discuss unpleasant subjects, and presently all seemed to have forgotten that there were sorrow and sadness in the world. Belle Boyd had heard this short colloquy, yet she, too, was gay as the gayest.

That night, in the privacy of her room, she reviewed the events of the evening. She had no part to play there, and she wept bitterly; not so much because of Giles Morgan's fall, as because of Abner Hanson's indifference. Loving him, or not, she had set her heart upon marrying him.

She tried to believe that morning would bring him to her side, when a little explanation would set all things right. But the entire day passed without sight of him. Other days came and went, until at last she knew he would come to her no more.

Abner Hanson would have periled his life for Belle Boyd, but he would not sacrifice for her one jot of principle.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FALL.

A MERCHANT sat alone in his counting-room, when the door opened to admit a visitor, whom he greeted cordially.

"Good-morning, Mr. Hanson. What can I do for you this morning? I have been a good deal put about these few days, but I am always ready for business, as well as yourself."

"I have come in behalf of a friend," said the young man in response to this greeting, while he watched closely the effect of his words.

"I suppose you mean Giles Morgan; and I may as well tell you, to begin with, that I shall have nothing more to do with him," was replied. "I gave him a good chance, and he has thrown it away. I calculated to take him into partnership, but he has settled that without consulting me. No use talking, Mr. Hanson; no use at all. A man who can not drink a glass of wine without getting beastly drunk, is too far gone for me. Happy to oblige you in anything else."

"Have you seen Mr. Morgan?"

"No, sir; I never want to see him again."

"Do you know how he came to drink a glass of wine?"

"No, sir; that makes no difference. I don't object to that. Any gentleman may take a glass of wine. That

was all right, if he had only stopped there ; but I have heard that he has been on a drunk ever since."

"He is sober now."

"I hope he will keep sober."

"I think he will, Mr. Doty."

"I am glad you have confidence in him. He needs all the friends he can get."

"Suppose I go surety for his good behavior in future, Mr. Doty. If you will give him another trial, I will engage to make good any loss which may result to you from so doing."

"But I don't want him around me. I have had enough of him. I never wish to see him again."

"I am sorry for that, Mr. Doty. Giles Morgan has been more sinned against than sinning. He was tempted beyond what he was able to bear. He *could* not drink *one* glass of wine without drinking more. You could not expect it of him."

"Any man ought to be able to do that ; to know when he has taken enough, and then stop."

"Yes, sir ; and according to my creed, he ought to stop before he takes any. It is life or death with Giles Morgan now. You hold his destiny in your hands."

"You put it strongly, Mr. Hanson."

"No more strongly than truly ; and, Mr. Doty, you are under obligations to save him. You owe it to him, to give him a helping hand and put him on his feet again. He has a right to expect mercy and *gratitude* from you."

"What do you mean, Mr. Hanson ? I have dealt fairly with him. For what should I be grateful to him ? Explain your meaning."

"I did not intend to tell you, sir. Morgan would not

tell you, if he died for it, and he will blame me, but I must leave nothing undone to change your purpose in regard to him. Pardon me, Mr. Doty, if I trespass upon family matters. One year ago, I think, you were anxious in regard to the habits of your son, Harry."

"You *are* trespassing, Mr. Hanson," said the merchant sharply. "I never talk of family matters outside of my home. My son Harry is all I could desire."

"Does he ever taste of wine?" asked Abner Hanson, still holding his companion to the desired point.

"That is a strange question for you to ask, Mr. Hanson, but Harry told me, yesterday, that he had been a pledged teetotaler for nearly a year."

"And were you glad to know that, Mr. Doty?"

"I was; because, whatever I may think of the use of wine, so long as he never drinks at all, he can never drink too much."

"Supposing he should once more drink too much, Mr. Doty, would you cast him off?"

"I couldn't, Mr. Hanson. Why, he is my son; my first-born child. Of course, I couldn't give him up. But what has that to do with Giles Morgan? He has no such claims upon me as has Harry."

"He has a claim upon you for Harry's sake. I am sure your son will tell you what that claim is."

"You talk in riddles, Mr. Hanson. But, now I think of it, Harry asked me a good many questions about Morgan, and advised me not to be too severe with him. Why didn't the boy speak out if he had anything to say? But here he comes to speak now for himself."

Abner Hanson stayed only to exchange greetings with the younger man, and then went out, leaving father and

son sole occupants of the room. Later in the day Mr. Doty called upon him, desiring a private interview, in which the former expressed his gratitude for what he had at first considered an unwarranted liberty.

"I have heard it all from Harry, who came to make the same request you had made," said the merchant. "I never can do enough for Morgan. It seems as though a man ought to be strong enough to drink a glass of wine and have that end it, but if he knows he can not, then he ought to be strong enough to refuse the first glass, even if it is urged upon him by a beautiful woman. Harry told me how Morgan came to drink wine."

"He was strongly tempted, Mr. Doty."

"Would it have been a temptation to you, Mr. Hanson?"

"It *was not* a temptation to me, Mr. Doty, because under no circumstances could I be induced to taste the cursed stuff. I hate it. There are hundreds of young men in this city who are going to ruin because they have no principle against dram-drinking, and there are hundreds of older men whose influence is all on the wrong side. *Your* son and the sons of a hundred other fathers are looking to such as you for an example of noble living. Pardon me, Mr. Doty, but I am moved to speak plainly."

"I am in the mood to pardon the plainest speaking, Mr. Hanson. I have seen Morgan and he will take his old place with me to-morrow. If he falls again, it shall not be for lack of encouragement."

So Giles Morgan was saved. A year after, he was admitted to partnership by Mr. Doty, on which occasion Abner Hanson was invited to the house of the senior partner, where a sumptuous dinner was served without wine.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRISONER.

AN old man, whose term of imprisonment had just expired, looked on in wonder, as before him was unrolled a bundle containing a new and substantial suit of clothing, which, the officer told him, had been provided for him by a friend.

"Where is she?" asked the old man sharply.

"Do you mean the person who brought the bundle?" was asked in reply.

"Yes. It was a woman, wasn't it?"

"A gentleman brought it, and he is waiting for you in the outer room."

It was Abner Hanson who waited for Bill Martin, that he might redeem his promise made to Eunice Poore. This was not his first visit to the prison, although he had never seen the prisoner while within its walls.

"Sullen and uncommunicative," was the character reported by the warden at each visit. "He will probably come back on a life sentence. It will take only a priming of liquor to make him ready for any crime; and such men as he go for liquor the first thing when they get out."

"I shall hope to prevent that," said Abner Hanson in response to this discouraging prophecy. "I promised his wife I would be a friend to him for her sake."

"It is all well enough to try, sir, but I have seen too

many bad men to have much hope of him. Wives are always trying to help their husbands, no matter how wicked they are, but Martin is one of the worst."

Although the young man knew this to be true, he was hardly prepared for the defiant air with which his overtures of friendship were received. Not a word spoke the man who glared at him savagely, recalling the scene in the garden of the old tavern so many years before.

"I have a message to you from your wife," he said at length.

"Where is she?" growled the wretch. "Why didn't she bring her own messages?"

"She could not, and so sent it by me," replied Mr. Hanson. "I have a carriage at the door, waiting to take us to a comfortable room where we can talk at our leisure. I will explain to you there why your wife did not come."

"Have you set a trap for me and expect me to run my neck into it?"

"No, Mr. Martin, I have not. I came here this morning, because I promised your wife that I would come; and I don't believe you are such a coward as to fear to trust yourself with me."

The right chord was struck, and to prove himself not a coward, Bill Martin entered the waiting carriage, while his friend sprang to a seat with the driver. After a short drive they stopped at a plain house, and were shown into a room containing a few articles of cheap furniture. Upon a table, laid for one, was hot coffee, with a plenty of substantial food, of which the old man was urged to partake.

"Who paid for it?" he demanded.

"I paid for it," replied Abner Hanson. "I did it for your wife's sake."

"Why didn't she come herself? Who said I had a wife anyway? There's a woman that thinks so, but I never wanted a wife. Always 'round when they aint of any use, and missing when they might do a man some good."

"Your wife, Eunice Poore, is dead, and you gave her her death-blow."

An ashy pallor overspread the face of the man thus accused. His lips moved, but he uttered no sound. At length he found voice to say :

"Who said I killed her? If she said so, she lied. Did she tell Dr. Farrar? She brought it on herself. She had too many fine notions to live with me. She might have done what I told her to. She wouldn't had any trouble if she had."

In his excitement he had spoken unguardedly, thus virtually acknowledging himself to be the murderer of his wife. Soon, however, he realized his imprudence and began to brandish his arms and stamp his feet, as he cried :

"I didn't kill Eunice Poore, and anybody that says I did shall suffer for it."

"Have a care, Mr. Martin. I promised to speak a kind word to you for her sake, but I did not promise to bear abuse from you. It will be better for you now to read her letter."

When sober, Bill Martin was easily intimidated; and that he had some human feelings, was shown by the fact that, as he broke the seal of the letter, he held it with such trembling hands it fell to the floor. It was returned to him; but after several ineffectual attempts to read it, he exclaimed :

"I *can't* read it. I can't, and I won't try. Let me go : I don't care where, if I can only get out of sight. Who

are you, and what do you know about Eunice Poore, or me either?"

"I am Abner Hanson," was replied. "I saw you first in the garden of the old tavern. I have seen you twice since in your wife's house. I lived with Samuel Redfield six years. So, as you can understand, I am pretty well acquainted with the circumstances of your life. I think I know you for just what you are; a villain of the deepest dye. Your wife was a good woman, and for her sake I would help you if I could."

"You won't set the officers on me."

"No, Mr. Martin, I won't. Why should I? I have no wish to injure you; but if you value your liberty, you will be careful of your conduct in future. You can not live long, at the longest. Why not try to make some amends for your past wickedness!"

"Shut up your preaching," shrieked Bill Martin, and then relapsed into silence, while his companion regarded him with a fixed gaze. Presently, he asked:

"Did you ever know an old, scraggy tree to straighten up and stand fair and square to the weather? It can't be done," he answered, without waiting for a reply. "No more can I live a goodish life like Sam Redfield."

"Sam Redfield is a noble man, Mr. Martin."

"I didn't say anything against him. He always had good pluck, but I wish I had his money. Here, let me out of this. I can't stand it any more than I could stand being in Heaven. This aint any place for me. You've treated me fair, and I'll remember it, but I must get out of this."

Before Abner Hanson could prevent it, Bill Martin was gone; and he knew full well that pursuit would be useless.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HIDDEN PAPERS.

EUNICE POORE'S house was unoccupied. Everything remained as she had left it, except where moth and rust had done their work ; while dust gathered on floor and furniture.

An occasional visitor would glance hurriedly around and then hasten away, as if fearful of encountering the evil spirit of the place. Yet the neighbors looked in vain for a single puff of smoke from the chimney which might betray Bill Martin's presence : and the authorities of the town were about to sell the property, when Abner Hanson volunteered to pay the taxes.

"Are you keeping the house for the man that killed Eunice Poore?" asked Paul Redfield, while enjoying a summer ramble with this friend.

"I am keeping it for her husband," was replied. "He is beyond my reach, but it may be that he will sometime seek shelter in the old home."

"And do you care, Abner, to have him find it?"

"Yes, Paul, I do. It seems almost strange that I should, but I am always on the lookout for him."

"I hate him for treating Aunt Eunice so. He deserves to be hanged."

"I presume he does, yet I would not be the means of bringing him to the gallows."

Paul Redfield made no reply to this remark. They were nearing the deserted house ; and despite the sunshine, with song of birds and hum of bees, he felt its influence. He stepped more cautiously, and kept closer to his friend.

"Are you going in?" he asked at length.

"Certainly, I am," was replied.

The door creaked and groaned, as it was pushed open to admit the two young men who stood side by side in the little kitchen, where so many scenes of cruelty had transpired.

"You know that Eunice feared for you," said Abner Hanson, resting his hand upon his companion's shoulder.

"I do know it, for she told me, but I have no fears for myself. I know where I am safe. Father and mother have talked with me. I am old Zeke Redfield's grandson."

"His only grandson, too, Paul, and you owe it to the world to make your name honorable."

"God helping me, Abner, I will do it. I have never tasted liquor."

"No more have I, Paul, and as we value our souls, we *must* not taste it."

"I never will. I am bound by the most solemn pledges. My father exacted them from me before I went away to school, and I have kept them inviolate. Can you not trust me now, Abner?"

"Yes, Paul, I can, but I must tell you, as Eunice Poore told me, your time has not yet come. When some beautiful girl who has half won your heart asks you to drink wine with her, your firmness will be put to the test."

"Were you tested in that way, Abner?"

"Yes, Paul, I was, and another fell, while I stood firm."

“So will I stand firm under all temptation. I *must*. I have everything at stake, and since Mr. Conrad and you have engaged to give me a place in your store, I have realized, more than ever before, that my success in life depends upon myself; and I ask God, every day, to make me worthy of your entire confidence.”

“I have never doubted your worthiness, Paul, but I have seen so many ruined by the wine-cup, that I am anxious for every young man who has not proved his strength of principle and purpose. I promised Eunice, too, that I would warn you, and I chose to do it here. Now let us go.”

So into the glad sunlight they went, closing the sagging door behind them, and turning their steps homeward.

It had long been Paul Redfield's ambition to go to the city with his old friend; and now that he had attained his majority, this ambition was to be gratified. There, he entered heartily upon his chosen career, and for which he evinced such aptitude, that Mr. Conrad promised him speedy promotion. Two years passed quickly, bringing him more of success than he had dared to anticipate. He was the confidential clerk, and might hope, at no very distant day, to be admitted as partner in the firm of Conrad and Hanson.

These years had also brought much of happiness to Abner Hanson. He was married to one every way worthy of him, as he was worthy of her. When they established their home, a younger sister of Mrs. Hanson came to reside with them, and there Paul Redfield met his fate.

He was spending an evening with these friends, when his host was summoned to a dying man in one of the

worst quarters of the city. A wretched-looking woman had delivered the message and waited to act as guide.

"The man told me where to come for you and what to say," she answered in reply to Abner Hanson's questions, and as nothing further could be elicited, he prepared to follow her.

He had been in many loathsome places, but in none so loathsome as the low underground apartment to which he was conducted.

"He told me to stay out till you got through," said the woman, as he groped his way to a heap of straw where lay Bill Martin.

"It's 'most up with me, and I sent for you," whispered the dying man hoarsely. "I don't want any preaching. I haint got time for it, and it won't do any good. But you treated me like human, and I promised to remember it. I've kept track of you, and a good many other folks too. You married one of the Hurlburt girls, and Paul Redfield is going to marry the other. Aint that so?"

"Yes," was replied, and the speaker was too much astonished to say more.

"I've got the secret that keeps them from being rich. I'm the last one that knows it, and— Give me that tin cup, or I sha'n't hold out to tell."

The cup was given and the contents drained; when after a short silence, the hoarse whisper was resumed.

"They are two of Larabee's heirs, and there's a big property waiting for papers to prove it. The papers are in the south room, in a cupboard in the panel-work next to the kitchen. I meant to get them, but I couldn't. I wanted Eunice to, and she wouldn't. That's what made

me strike her. I was sorry I struck her so hard. She swore, on the Bible, she wouldn't tell. Poor—Eunice—I'm going—going—gone."

Bill Martin was dead. With his last expiring breath, he confessed the secret he had so long guarded.

Abner Hanson opened the door of the room, to find his guide cowering upon the threshold, and with a promise to attend to the burial of the dead man, he went to the nearest police station for needed assistance. The next day a grave was dug in the potter's field, and the scarred face hidden forever from mortal sight.

No one had suspected there was a cupboard in the panel-work of the south room, but examination revealed it ; and there, in a tightly closed tin box, were the long missing papers.

What wonder that a curse had rested upon the old tavern, and followed the family of the old landlord ! A cursed business had been transacted over the bar, and in the adjoining south room.

Robbery and murder, such as hold the perpetrators amenable to law ! Robbery and murder, too, of which the law takes no cognizance !

FIFE AND DRUM

FIFE AND DRUM.

CHAPTER I.

DRIFTING.

"FIFE and Drum. There they go, floating down the river; playing the very same tunes their grandfathers played before them. Always together, too, as their fathers were; and it looks a little to me as though they were on the same track other ways too."

As Grandfather Willey said this, the family came to the north hall-door, where they stood listening to the regular tap of a drum, accompanying a fife skillfully played.

"Going down to Ray's," remarked a young man half under his breath. "There's a city girl there, and Jim Terry thinks there never was anybody like her."

"Who is she, Will?"

"Stephen Ray's daughter, and they say her father is rich."

"May be he is. I knew him when he was a boy, and he was after money then. Folks thought he didn't always keep truth on his side, but I never had enough dealings with him to know. There! Jim and Joe are at it again. Yankee Doodle, with a good many variations; but you can't miss the tune if you try"; and the

old man whistled an accompaniment, in which a dark-eyed, little maiden joined.

"Was that exactly right?" she asked, coming closer to her grandfather.

"Exactly," was replied. "There isn't a boy in town could do better. Don't find fault with the child," he added, turning to her mother, with whom whistling girls found little favor. "The music is in her, and must come out. I remember when I thought the fife and drum the very grandest part of muster-day. The fifer and drummer looked larger to me than any of the officers. They made good music too, for plain folks as we were then. The boys are going 'round the bend, now, to the tune of 'The Girl I Left Behind Me.'"

"They better play that when they are coming home," said Will.

"Can't do it, you know. They can drift down the river, but they must row back. It is easy drifting, but when it comes to rowing against the current, there is hard work to be done; and a good many find it so hard, they give up trying."

"And keep on drifting?"

"Yes, Lizzie, that is the way of it."

"I shouldn't like that way, and I sha'n't do it. I shall row, and go where I want to."

"It will take all your strength, child, a good many times, so you won't have any left for whistling."

"Then I won't whistle."

"Jim and Joe won't come back very early. They always stay late when they go to Ray's," said Will Dow, who, for some reason, was greatly interested in the movements of these friends.

"Better stay late there than in a worse place; but Jim needs to be asleep in good season these days. He is earning big wages."

"The same as Joe, grandfather."

"Yes, but he don't earn his money as easy as Joe does. He isn't as strong. Their fathers were as nigh matched for strength as you could reckon, but Joe's has got the advantage now. Jim has had the hardest time."

"He has always been a good boy to his mother. I don't know what she would have done, if he had been like his father."

"You can't tell what he will be twenty-five years from now. There is a good deal of father about him."

"His father was different twenty-five years ago."

"To be sure he was. Levi Terry was as handsome a youngster as you'll ever be likely to see. Smart and capable, too; ready to do anybody a kindness, and just bewitching the girls. I don't believe there was a girl in the county could said no to him, if he had asked her to be his wife."

"You couldn't be sure of that, grandfather."

"I know it. Girls are freaky things, but Levi Terry knew how to please a woman, and when he was married, I don't doubt there was a good many that envied his wife."

"I don't think any one envies her now. I met him last evening, and I wondered how he could ever have been thought a decent man. Jim was a little ways behind, keeping close watch of him."

"Jim has been after his father scores of times. I hope no one will need to go after him."

"I hope not, grandfather. I never heard that Jim was likely to follow his father's example."

"Neither have I, but he didn't start fair; so you don't know where he'll fetch up. He is Levi Terry's son, and the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children in a way that don't seem hardly just; 'though we know God never deals unjustly with His creatures. Joe Duncan's father is a sober man, and there is where he has the advantage of Jim."

"That is a good deal, 'though Joe has always had to work his way."

"I know it. Amos Duncan has had a good many pull-backs about getting property. Luck, as they call it, has gone against him. I always thought it made a difference with him, not having the woman he wanted for a wife, to begin with. He never let it break the friendship between him and Levi Terry, but Anna Strong missed a good husband when she missed him. He is a kind man in his home, and he has got a good wife. Hope's long sickness cost him a sight of money, not to say anything about the watching and worry over her."

"She will pay them for it all, father. Her mother says she couldn't keep house without her. She isn't as strong as the other girls are, but she has a wonderful faculty for planning and calculating. Joe hears to her in everything."

"Even to going down to Ray's?"

"Yes, sir. She says she don't expect to keep him tied to her all his life; and perhaps that is the reason he stays with her so much."

"I presume it is. She is a nice girl; not much like her mother, but like what her father ought to have

been. He is gaining on himself now, and Joe will help him."

"Joe is a splendid fellow. People don't know what there is in him yet. He hasn't shown himself out."

"Better not get his head too full of that city girl if he means to row his way up-stream with strong, steady strokes. It makes a difference who sits at the helm of the boat; all the difference between one woman and another. When cool weather comes, that Ray girl will go home and forget the country boys she amused herself with this summer."

"Country boys are as good as she is, grandfather."

"Better, perhaps, but homely goodness don't count for much in some places."

"And in some places it counts for a good deal."

"Certainly; and for my part, I don't care how homely the goodness is, if I am only sure of it."

"Why not have goodness that looks pretty to everybody! That is the kind I mean to have," said Lizzie Dow. "The minister told us, last Sunday, that real goodness is the most beautiful thing in the world; and real goodness is loving God with all your heart, and loving your neighbor as yourself. I think I can love God that way, but I don't want to love all my neighbors as well as I do myself."

"I don't know what to make of that child," remarked her mother, as she went whistling through the hall to the south door, from which could be seen the far-off mountains, whose tops seemed to pierce the very skies. "Our ways here at home don't suit her."

"Then let us suit our ways to her," responded Will

"She is the smartest girl I ever saw, if she is my sister I think she and Hope Duncan are some alike."

"I think she has taken some of her notions from Hope Duncan. Hope's long sickness has made her different from other girls, and Lizzie always wanted to be with her."

"Lizzie has learned a good deal at neighbor Duncan's, and as long as she is good as she is now, you can afford to humor her notions. Children aint all run in the same mold, and it don't pay to try to cut them over by the same pattern. Sometimes the best part is cut off in doing that."

"The cutting hurts, too, grandfather."

"I know it, Will, 'though I didn't use to think of that. I made some mistakes in trying to cut, and I want others to take warning by my experience. Fife and Drum are through for to-night. Will, do you wish you were down to Ray's?" asked the old man, abruptly, when left alone with his grandson.

"No, sir, I don't," was replied. "If I am half a fool, I am not a whole one. I know better than to waste ammunition on game I never can hit."

"I'm glad of it, my boy, and there's another thing it's well to remember: There's a good deal that looks better at a distance than near to. Your father is just driving up, and he must be tired."

"I can take care of his horse," said the young man, and hastened to perform this service.

"I am glad you are here," remarked the farmer, cordially, as his son appeared. "I want to consult **you** about a trade that has been proposed to me."

“Yes, sir,” replied Will, quite forgetting the conversation in which he had just borne a part.

“It will make hard work for us, a year or two; but if it turns out as it looks as though it might, it will give you and Lizzie a chance in the world, such as your mother and I never had,” remarked Mr. Dow, after an hour’s consultation with the son, who was entirely in his confidence.

CHAPTER II.

STEERING.

"HOPE, are you asleep?" asked Joe Duncan, softly after listening for some minutes at the door of his sister's chamber.

"No; I have been lying awake, thinking," she replied in the same guarded tone. "Wait until I have put on a wrapper; then come in, and we will have a good talk."

"I am selfish to trouble you, but I knew I couldn't sleep till I had talked off some of my feelings, or fancies; I don't know certainly which they are, but I thought they were real feelings," said the brother, later.

"I presume they are. We have a great many feelings which other people call fancies. My fancies are real to me."

"Everything is real to you. I don't know how any one of the family could live without you. I have been down to Ray's."

"I knew you had."

"Jim Terry went with me, but the next time he goes, he will go without me. I can beat an accompaniment to him in some places, but not there. He is dead in love with Stephanie Ray."

Hope Duncan sat in the shadow, so that her brother did not see the flush upon her usually pale cheek; and

it was well, also, that a cloud passing over the moon made the shadow still deeper, to hide the emotion she could not repress.

"Does she care for him?" was asked at length.

"I don't know. I think she does. At any rate, I felt myself in the way this evening. Miss Alice Ray showed me some new engravings I am sure you would be delighted to see, but I was so stupid and inattentive, she must have thought me a fool. She thought right, too. I have been a fool."

"No, Joe dear, you have not. You have had your feelings stirred; and some of your best feelings, too. You needn't tell me any more about it. I have seen it all along."

"Have you seen it in Jim too?"

"I have not seen Jim as I see you, but whatever comes, we wish him to have all the happiness which can rightfully be his. We have always been good friends, and this must not break our friendship. You two have been Fife and Drum since you were able to beat a tattoo with drum-sticks."

"We are going to continue good friends; but Stephanie Ray won't make him the wife he needs, even if she marries him. He needs somebody strong and decided, to lean upon."

"Don't be unjust or ungenerous, Joe. Stephanie Ray is just as strong and decided as she was when you first met her."

"I know she is, Hope; but Jim and I are different in some things. He is all right; handsome and good, and more, too; but when it comes to——"

"Helping his mother, he never fails," said the sister,

completing her brother's sentence. "He has had a great deal to bear, and he has borne it bravely."

"I know he has, and it is a rest to a fellow who works as hard as he does, and has only tired people 'round him, just to see a girl, looking as cool and comfortable as Stephanie Ray, in her pretty muslin dresses, looped up with ribbons and flowers. That is what makes half the charm for Jim and all the rest of us."

Hope Duncan made a note of this, and the next afternoon appeared in a dress which was so becoming, that her brother complimented her upon having grown suddenly handsome.

"You and Lilla both look as nice and sweet as Stephanie Ray; sweeter, too," he said. "Your hair is just lovely. Why didn't you ever wear it in that way before?"

"I don't know that I ever thought of it before."

"I hope you will think of it every day in future. Now persuade mother to wear pretty dresses, and we shall be quite a genteel family. It will make us all feel ten years younger."

"Are you so old that you need ten years taken from your age?"

"I am older by ten years than I was last March."

"You are wiser, too."

"Am I?" asked the young man, looking at his sister earnestly.

"Yes, Joe dear, you are. I can see it in your face."

"Thank you. You always help me. I know I have learned some lessons. Don't let mother wear that old dark dress another afternoon. If she hasn't any other I will give you the money to buy one. I will give you

some money anyway. Here are five dollars to spend as you please."

"Thank you. I was wishing I could earn five dollars, but it seems hardly right to take this from you."

"It is right. I earned it for you. I expect to do extra work a few weeks now, so you will see less of me, but I shall think of you all the more. Don't offer any objections. I can do it without overtaxing myself. I have been drifting with the current; now I must row against it, with you at the helm. So, sister mine, steer straight for some blessed haven; and be sure that mother wears a pretty dress."

The next afternoon the seldom-used parlor was opened, the curtains looped back, and a work-stand placed by the north window.

"Now, mother, you are to take the large rocking-chair. I will occupy the small one, and Lilla may choose for herself," said Hope, almost gleefully.

"I don't know what has come over you, that you wanted to sit in here this afternoon," responded Mrs. Duncan, who, seated in a large, comfortable chair, looked quite unlike the poorly-dressed woman of yesterday.

"I was reading not long ago that wise people make the most of all their resources, and it occurred to me that this room is one of our resources," replied her daughter.

"I suppose it is, 'though we never use it enough to hardly pay for having it. I must say it is pleasant in here, away from all the work."

"We are working here, mother," said Lilla, who was the very picture of contentment. "I can sew a great deal better in here than in the corner bedroom, where

everything is all tucked up and huddled together. I like plenty of elbow room, and I think we better sit in here every day; don't you, mother?"

"I don't know. It would make another room to look after and keep clean."

"Let us try it a week," suggested Hope, and before a reply could be made, Joe appeared at the window by which she was sitting.

"I never knew before how comfortable we might be," he remarked, looking around with evident satisfaction. "If we had some nice books on the tables and some pictures on the walls, this would be as pleasant as anybody's parlor. But I am forgetting my errand. I came to tell you not to expect me home to supper. I shall work till ten o'clock, and perhaps later."

"Then can't I carry your supper to you?" asked Lilla.

"I hope you can, and be sure to wear the dress you have on," replied her brother. "The sight of the dress will give an added relish to doughnuts and cheese. Don't set up for me, Hope, and don't worry if I am not in until morning. There is a job to be done, and if I am left to do it alone, it will take most of the night."

"Joe is working too hard," said Mrs. Duncan when he had gone.

"It won't hurt him to work so for a little while. He is strong and well, and he wishes to earn what he can. We will send him a nice supper, mother."

"Yes, mother, let me have some of everything good in the house; and please let me stay with him a while. Jim Terry ought to help him, but he goes down to Ray's almost every night and stays ever so late.

Anna told me so, and she says her mother is sorry. Why, there is Miss Alice Ray coming, this minute, with her cousin," added Lilla in an excited tone. "I am real glad we are in the parlor."

Miss Alice Ray was several years older, and far more intelligent than her young cousin, who was intent only upon winning admiration and enjoying to the full whatever of ease and luxury she could command. Coming into the "real country" was a new experience to her, and she intended to make the most of her opportunities. For want of more elegant admirers, she had smiled upon Jim Terry and Joe Duncan; at length giving a preference to the former. She had proposed a picnic, to which Miss Alice Ray had assented, and this afternoon call was made for the purpose of inviting the Duncans. As the call was necessarily short, its object was soon told.

"We wish to see all the young people in this part of the town," said Miss Ray. "We can depend upon you, Hope."

"Thank you. I think you can."

"And your brothers and sister. We want the very young people. You will come, Lilla?"

"I will if I can. I never went to but one picnic, and that was just splendid."

"We will all try to have this just splendid. Good-afternoon. I have so many to see, that I must be in haste."

Joe Duncan received his supper in good season, and with it an invitation to Miss Ray's picnic.

"Where is Jim?" soon asked Lilla.

"He has gone away," was replied.

"Where? Down to see Stephanie Ray?" persisted the child.

"Perhaps so. He didn't tell me."

"Our Hope is a good deal nicer and handsomer than that Ray girl; and I think a good many queer things happen sometimes; don't you, Joe?"

"I certainly do think so, Lilla"; and with this assent the topic of conversation was changed. "Hope and Amos and you can go to the picnic, but I must work next Thursday. I will have my picnic in the fall, when nuts are ripe."

"May I go with you?"

"Yes; I shouldn't expect good luck without you."

"And may I ask Lizzie Dow to go too?"

"Of course you may."

"And oh! won't we have a splendid time!"

"I think we will. At any rate, we will try for a winter's supply of nuts."

CHAPTER III.

THE PICNIC.

"FANE, what do you intend to do with Jim Terry?"

"Do with Jim Terry!" repeated Stephanie Ray in a tone expressive of the utmost astonishment. "What do you mean, Cousin Alice? He is nothing to me."

"Then why do you treat him as if he was everything to you? If you are flirting with him, simply to amuse yourself, he ought to know it. He is in earnest. He loves you, and you are responsible for it. What will you do with him when you go back to your father?"

"Leave him where I found him."

"You can not do that. You have come into his life as a veritable part of it. Don't you care at all for him, Fane? If he was worth a million of dollars, how would it be then?"

"He would be perfectly splendid; the most fascinating young man it was ever my good fortune to meet; but now I don't want to think anything about it. I am having a nice time up here, while father has gone West, to look after his business. You introduced Jim Terry and Joe Duncan to me; and how did I know they worked in the big saw-mill like any two Irishmen. You ought to have told me."

"They are not working like two Irishmen. They

work like two intelligent, energetic young men, who have their own way to make in the world, and are doing it honorably. Their hearts are made of too good material to be used as foot-balls for idle flirts."

"You are cross to me, Cousin Alice. I don't see what I have done that is so bad."

"I am vexed with you, Fane. Jim Terry ought not to spend so much time here."

"Then let him stay away. I don't oblige him to come."

"Don't you wish him to come? Wouldn't you miss him if he should stay away for a week, and wouldn't you tell him, more perhaps by your looks and actions than by words, that the time had seemed very long?"

"I suppose I should, Cousin Alice, and it would be dreadfully dull here evenings without him, now I am used to his coming. I wish he was rich."

"Then you do love him a little, Fane?"

"I don't know. He is going to be splendid-looking, and if he had a little more polish, there couldn't anybody find fault with his manners."

"The polish can be easily acquired; but Jim is poor, and always will be, unless he has a wife to help him. Would you marry him and live as his wife ought to live; helping him to his best and truest life; working and economizing to make the most of a limited income? Do you love him well enough for that, Fane?"

"I wouldn't work and economize for anybody. I couldn't do it. I don't how to live without plenty of money to spend."

"You may be obliged to learn. Grandfather Ray used to say that money is a great convenience, but a

poor dependence. Promise me one thing," added Alice Ray, after a silence her cousin did not seem disposed to break. "Promise me not to monopolize Jim Terry at the picnic, unless you propose to marry him."

"I never monopolize him. He is free to do as he pleases."

Stephanie Ray said this lightly, but she knew the young man was not free. He knew it too, and wondered again and again if the fetters which bound him bound her also. He was going to the picnic, of course, and he urged Joe Duncan to go.

"What will a fife be without a drum?" he asked.

"Itself, while the drum is only an accompaniment which can be well dispensed with."

"No, it can not. The drum gives volume and power to otherwise thin music. Come, Joe, you have been working as if on a wager for the last fortnight, and it is time you had some recreation. I don't believe you have beat a single tattoo."

"Amos does that, and he can beat an accompaniment for you at the picnic as well as I. My place is here. You won't mind, though, if I give you a word of advice?"

"No, Joe, I won't. It is likely I need it bad enough."

"Don't give yourself away, Jim, heart and soul, until you are reasonably sure the gift will be appreciated."

For a moment the young man's eyes flashed with anger, but presently he answered:

"I understand you. I know all about it, and there are ten chances to one that I am making a fool of myself; but it is too late to go back where I was last spring. I must go in and take what comes. I need to work more than you do, but I must go to that picnic."

Most of the company who had been invited were on the ground in good season, ready to make the occasion as pleasant as possible. There was a drummer and a fifer; Lizzie Dow whistling in such time and tune as to add much to their efforts, and the three musicians acquitting themselves so well as to be voted "a first-class band."

Jim Terry devoted himself to the general entertainment, bestowing old-time attentions upon Hope Duncan, who was looking so bright and pretty, her friends wondered they had not before known how handsome she was. Wherever she went she drew a crowd around her, and perhaps it was this which piqued her rival into an attempt to regain supremacy.

She was only too successful, and when the day was over she sought to put aside the memory of words to which she had listened, with the memory of other words she had herself spoken, as one puts aside a rapturous dream, to be no more recalled.

Not so her companion. He had not intended it, but the afternoon had sealed his destiny, and henceforth—what?

The next day his mother was stricken down with illness, and he was too loyal to leave her. His father only drank more deeply, while the children depended entirely upon Brother Jim.

Mrs. Duncan and Hope did what they could for their neighbors; assisting in the care of the sick woman, who grew rapidly worse, until the time of her death.

Her husband spent the last two days of her life at her bedside, filled with grief and remorse. Sometimes, when left alone together, the trembling voice of the wife

could be heard, praying for him she had loved through all the years of poverty and neglect, since they had stood, side by side, at the altar.

If promises of reform were then made, no one save these two knew. Mrs. Terry had never talked of her husband's habits; not even with the son she trusted so implicitly, and to whom she now left her cares and responsibilities.

He could not realize that she was dead. Friends made preparations for the funeral; he acquiescing in their plans without thought of dissent. His heart cried out for sympathy which one alone could give. The night before his mother was to be buried out of his sight, he loosed the boat from its moorings, and drifted down the river to the familiar landing-place. Here he found Miss Alice Ray, who greeted him with marked cordiality, inquiring kindly for his family, and expressing her sincere sympathy for them in their bereavement.

"I was a little lonely, and so I came down here," she said at length. "Perhaps you don't know that Fane has gone. She left her good-bye for you, with thanks for the pleasure you have given her this summer. Her father sent for her, and she went yesterday morning. He intends to return West, and she will go with him."

These last sentences were unheeded by the young man to whom they were addressed. He only knew that she whom he loved had gone, leaving him the most commonplace message.

"You are quite worn out, watching with your mother," added his companion, who wished to save him needless pain. "You have grown thin and pale since I saw you. Come up to the house and rest."

"Thank you, but I must not," replied the young man, with an effort at self-control, yet speaking in a strange, unnatural voice. "Are you sure your cousin left no note for me?"

"Quite sure," was replied. "I am afraid my cousin is a sad flirt, making new friends wherever she goes, and leaving old friends to their fate. She has been petted and indulged, until she seems to think admiration her due."

"But, Miss Ray——"

"Don't say what you will wish unsaid, my friend. Forget the summer and Stephanie Ray."

James Terry stayed to hear no more. Seating himself at the oars, he was soon on his way toward home. How he reached there he could not have told; but once there, he locked himself into his room, refusing to be seen.

CHAPTER IV.

RESPONSIBILITIES.

"JIM TERRY looks as though he had been fighting for his life," remarked Hope Duncan to her brother the next morning.

"He went down to Ray's last evening, and I suppose he was disappointed in not finding Stephanie Ray there. I could have told him she was gone, and for his sake I am glad she is. She had only a few hours' notice. Somebody who pretends to know says Jim offered himself to her the afternoon of the picnic, and she accepted him."

"Do you believe it?"

"I neither believe nor disbelieve; but if it is true, she must have given him encouragement, or he would never have committed himself. A downright refusal would mortify him terribly."

"We will hope for the best, Joe. He has enough to bear at home, and we must help him. His father is likely to be a great burden, and his brothers will require all the care he can give them. Anna will do her best; and she is a good, capable girl; but it is impossible for her to fill her mother's place."

None felt this more than the young girl herself, who, while grieving for the loss of her best earthly friend, looked forward to the future with many sad forebodings.

How they were to live was a problem she could not solve. Poor and scant as had been the comforts of their home, these comforts must necessarily be less.

The funeral of Mrs. Terry was attended by a large number of people who thus testified their respect for one who had been a true friend and a consistent Christian. Amos Duncan and his family occupied seats with the mourners, and it was observed that he lingered a little when taking the last look of the woman who had chosen other love than his, and who had died before her time, because of disappointment and hardship.

Even then, Levi Terry watched him closely, and as he turned away, their eyes met, each reading the other's thoughts, and going back to the old days when they were rivals in love.

The funeral over, Jim returned to his work. His father, too, worked, abstaining from the use of all intoxicating drinks, and spending his leisure time with his family.

He went out, however, one evening, and not returning, his son went in search of him. No one could give any account of him in the village; but he had been seen, just at dark, walking by the river. The night was spent in fruitless efforts to find him, and the next morning his body was discovered in the water. Whether drowned by accident, or intention, could not be known; yet it was a significant fact, that not many days after, a party of boys found an empty whisky flask near the place where he was last seen. He was buried by the side of his wife, and except that his children were thus relieved of a constant anxiety in regard to him, his death made no change with them.

"I don't know what to do with the boys," said Jim Terry to his friend, Joe Duncan. "They need a steady hand and steady work. I wish your father would take them, and if they don't pay their way, I will make up what is lacking."

"You must keep the boys yourself, Jim. You need them and they need you. They have confidence in you, and you can do more for them than any one else. They are good boys, and if you can keep them from getting a taste of liquor, they will be all right. Above all, keep a sharp eye on Eben."

"I know all about it, Joe, and that is why I wish your father would take them. Hope can wind them 'round her finger. They think she is the best and handsomest girl in the world, and Anna just worships her. She can do ten times as much for them as I can. But I am selfish. I have no right to ask it of her. It seems to me, sometimes, I have no right to ask anything of anybody, now mother is gone. She did the best she could for us, although I used to think, if she would talk to me frankly about father, it would be easier for us both."

"It would probably have been harder for her; and now it is all over, it will make no difference with you."

"I wish I was sure that it *is* all over, Joe. I wish I was sure that when father died, his habits died with him."

"What do you mean, Jim?"

"Don't ask me. Perhaps I don't know exactly what I mean. But promise me one thing; if you see me going wrong, reach out your hand to save me. Don't give me up."

"I promise," replied Joe Duncan, looking straight into the eyes of his friend. "Come what may, you may count on me to the end. But, Jim, you must not go wrong. Think how much depends upon you."

"I know it all."

"And you will govern yourself accordingly. You are tired and disheartened now, but time brings rest and blunts the edge of sorrow. You have the consolation of knowing that you did your duty by your parents."

"I intended to do it, but I am afraid I have neglected mother this summer. There is hot blood in my veins, Joe."

"Good, healthy blood, Jim, and you are wise enough to keep it so."

"I am not so wise as I ought to be. I need to learn many lessons before I can lay claim to wisdom."

The name of Stephanie Ray had not been mentioned, but Joe Duncan well knew that her abrupt departure had much to do with his friend's unhappiness. Hope, too, saw it all, grieving that she could not comfort him, even while putting away her own fondly cherished hopes. Anna Terry came to her often for advice, and often was her skill called in requisition to make the most of unpromising materials.

"It's my opinion they couldn't keep soul and body together, in the old house, if it wasn't for the Duncans," remarked Grandfather Willey, as he listened again to the fife and drum. "That sounds more cheery than anything I've heard before from Jim since his mother died. It didn't do him any good having that Ray girl 'round, this summer, and I hope we've seen the last of her. But folks mistrust her father has got into trouble

about some property he had the management of, that belonged to somebody else. If he has, he'll come back to his brother for help, and maybe take his daughter here for a home."

"I hope she won't ever come this way again," said Lizzie Dow, turning to her brother, who was standing near. "I don't like her. I heard her tell her cousin, the day of the picnic, that all of us girls were dreadfully countrified. I wanted to tell her that we know as much as she does, if we don't smile and simper, and make big eyes one minute, and the next look shy as a bird. Now, grandfather, don't scold me for that. I have been wanting to say it this ever so long. Anna Terry says Stephanie Ray just turned the heads of all the young men and boys within ten miles."

"What do you think of that, Will?" asked grandfather.

"I think there are some level heads yet, and I think, too, there are some pretty girls within ten miles."

"Prettier than Stephanie Ray," responded Lizzie. "Hope Duncan is a thousand times prettier. She wears just lovely dresses, and looks as though she was going to a party every afternoon. So does Lilla, too, and they sit in the parlor with the windows open, so it seems like visiting. Why couldn't we sit in our parlor? "

Mrs. Dow was about to answer this question, when a warning glance from her father arrested the words upon her lips.

"I suppose we could, but the sun would fade the carpet, and there would be another room to take care of," she replied.

"I will buy another carpet when I grow up, and Will and I can do all the extra work."

"How will you buy the carpet?"

"Perhaps I shall whistle for it, and to-morrow, Will, we will see what we can make of our cold, dark, north-west room. If we were rich we could have a piano and an organ in it, and I don't know as I should care for anything else, except piles and piles of music."

CHAPTER V.

THE LEGACY.

"If it had only come while Mrs. Terry was **alive**, what a blessing it would have been," was said over and over again, when it was known that, by the death of a distant relative, she or her heirs were entitled to a legacy of several thousand dollars.

In due time this legacy was paid to her children; when Mr. Duncan consented to accept the guardianship of those who were under age. Arrangements were made by which Anna and George could attend school, while Eben, who from the first had been a source of anxiety, felt a new restraint upon his conduct.

"You must hold Eben," said Joe Duncan to his sister. "It is the worst thing in the world for him to feel that he has money, and I am not sure but it would have been better for them all to keep on in the old way. Jim has not forgotten Stephanie Ray. He never speaks of her, but I can see that he thinks of her, and now her father is in disgrace, it may be she will think it worth her while to win him back."

"And would Jim overlook a year of silence and neglect?"

"I presume he would. As he says, there is hot blood in his veins, and she has stirred it. She was a new revelation to him, and she flattered him by her preference.

I understand it, but I was cured of all that folly long ago. There is no need of my going away from home to find pleasant rooms or pleasant company. We are better off to-day than we ever were before."

"But you are putting all your earnings into the family purse, and that does not seem quite right," replied Hope.

"It is right. There will be time enough for me to work for myself. You give all your strength to the family; why should not I? But there comes Eben Terry. Something has gone wrong with him, I know by his looks. I will go and leave him to you."

"What is it?" asked the young lady, smilingly.

"Jim is making a fool of himself," was the emphatic response. "I don't suppose you can do anything about it, but it seemed to me I should feel better after I told you of it. That Ray girl is at her uncle's, and Jim has gone down there. I think she sent for him, and I wish she was a thousand miles off. She isn't half good enough for him, and if he marries her she will just drag him down till he gets so discouraged he won't care what he does. It is the money she wants, and likely she thinks Jim is rich. If he was poor as he used to be, she wouldn't have him, and I hope she won't anyway. If she does, good-bye to Jim."

"Oh, no, Eben! we can not afford to do that. Jim is too good to be spoiled."

"I hope he is, and I wish I was, but I am not so sure of myself. One thing, though, I shall keep my promise to you."

"I hope you will. There is your weak point, and you will find plenty of people ready to take advantage of it."

"I know all about it, and the worst of it is, I am my father's own son. But I think Jim needs a guardian as much as I do. He is a fool to go after that Ray girl. I saw enough of her at the picnic last year, and, to my eyes, she was the homeliest girl there was there."

Stephanie Ray had come to her uncle's quietly; so quietly that in the ordinary course of events, Jim Terry might not have known it for several days.

"You must not speak unkindly of Jim. Think of all he has done for you."

"I don't mean to say anything unkind of him," responded the boy, whose heart was melted by the thought of all his brother's kindness. "I am ready to do anything to help him, and when he gets married I want him to have a dear, good wife who will love him and keep him in the right track. I wish you would talk to him the same as you do to me, and tell him what he ought to do. That Ray girl thinks he has got money, and I shouldn't wonder if she thinks he is good-looking."

"If she does, she thinks rightly."

"I know it. He is a good deal better-looking than she is; but that wouldn't do any hurt, if she was the right one for him. He ought to have such a woman as you are for a wife. You would keep him right up to the very best there is in him, and that is good enough for anybody. When our house was bought I thought we were all sure of a home there, but nobody knows what may happen now. It is my opinion that Stephanie Ray's father has lost his money, and she don't know what to do with herself, except to hang on to Jim. She won't want to live in this little town, but he ought to be where we can look after him."

Eben Terry was right in his opinion of Stephen Ray. Having appealed in vain to his brother for assistance, he made haste to put the width of the continent between him and those he had wronged, leaving his daughter to seek the only friends upon whom she dared to presume.

"I told you how it would be," said Grandfather Willey. "That girl was a dead weight on her father, and he was glad to get rid of her. If I can see straight, he has come to the end of his rope, and folks 'round here won't know much more about him. He was deceitful and dishonest when he was a boy, and it wouldn't be strange if his daughter is like him. If she is, she can make Jim Terry do anything she wants him to, and he never know but she is an angel of light."

Having once warned the young man in regard to her cousin, Miss Alice Ray could do no more. It was soon known that there was an engagement of marriage between them; and few were surprised when the bridegroom elect proposed to establish himself in business in a flourishing town fifty miles distant.

This broke up the old home. The house was rented, and the other members of the family were to find shelter at Mr. Duncan's, where some rooms, recently added to the house, were fitted up for their accommodation.

"When I have a home of my own, you will all have a home with me," said Jim Terry to his sister, who clung to him, sobbing, the night before they separated. "We shall see each other often; and if you need me, I can come to you at any hour. I do not love you less because I love another. You are not losing me, Anna dear; I shall be the same brother to you I have always been."

For answer to this Anna made no reply, save by a closer clasping of her arms around his neck. She did not detain him long; but she gazed after him, as if taking her last look of one who was going from her forever.

She confided her sorrows to Hope Duncan, who bade her look on the bright side; expecting the best, rather than the worst.

“But there is no best,” replied the young girl. “Jim has changed already. Mother was a Christian, and she taught us to reverence holy things, but Fane Ray ridicules them. Jim is just infatuated with her, although it seems to me, sometimes, he wishes he had never seen her. I wish we had never had a cent of money left to us. It was better for us to be poor and work hard. Jim needs hard work, and we need him.”

“There are three of you, Anna. George and Eben are good brothers.”

“I know they are, and I love them; but neither of them can ever take Jim’s place with me.”

CHAPTER VI.

A MISTAKE.

HE was James Terry now; with a new life opening before him. His handsome face, fine figure, and real kindness of heart, which gave an unstudied grace to his manners, soon won for him hosts of friends. The principles and practices his mother had taught him gave him a sure place in the confidence of those with whom he transacted business.

He learned more of life; more of his own needs, and more of what constitutes true nobility of character. Others smiled upon him as sweetly as had Stephanie Ray; others, too, whom he knew to be her superiors. Yet, among them all—as he confessed to himself—there was not one beside whom Hope Duncan might not stand, an equal.

“Hope is just splendid,” exclaimed Lizzie Dow, on returning from an afternoon spent in the pleasant parlor which seemed, every day, to receive some added touch of elegance. “Anna Terry means to be like her, and if I could live with her all the time, I know I should be better than I am now. She is always doing something pretty; and when she talks religion, it is almost like talking poetry. I wish she would marry Will, so I could have her for a sister. Then I should like to have them live in a house all by themselves, so I could see Hope

begin and make something out of nothing. That is more than Fane Ray can do."

"More than Hope Duncan can do, either, child. She must have something to begin with."

"Well, yes, grandfather, I suppose she must, but Fane Ray don't even know how to do common work. Isn't that a pity?"

Miss Alice Ray considered it so, and endeavored to impress her cousin with the same feeling; but the girl was too indolent and selfish to change her habits; while she complained of the unkindness of those upon whom she was dependent. She knew nothing of her father, whose disgrace had been made public, and who would find it for his interest to remain at a distance from familiar scenes. She wished to be married, in order that she might feel more at liberty to do as she pleased.

"I believe Jim more than half repents of his engagement with Stephanie Ray," said Joe Duncan to his sister, after a visit, in which the young men had been much together, entertaining themselves and their neighbors with the music of old times. "If I am not mistaken, he has discovered that she can be very exacting and very disagreeable. I know it has been a rest to him to be here. Anna has made it as pleasant as she could for him, and he has appreciated her efforts. He has my sympathy, as he will have my assistance, if he ever needs it. He is doing very well in his business."

"Eben is doing well too. He has changed wonderfully in the last two years."

"He has. He seems hardly like the same person he was when his mother died, and he says he owes it all to you. If he and I make our plans work, we shall start

up a business here that will pay good profits after we get fairly going. He will furnish most of the capital, but I shall do my part in some way."

"You would have more capital, if you spent less for the rest of the family," was replied.

"I know about that, Hope, and I know that every dollar I have spent here, at home, has proved a good investment. Father is doing remarkably well for him, and mother looks ten years younger than she used to. Amos and Lilla shall have a good education, and you shall have everything you want, that I can buy for you. I hope you will not leave us for many a year."

"There is no danger of it, Joe dear. I think I fit the place where I am better than I should fit any other place."

"You would fit and grace any place where you were appreciated. I have a great admiration for my sister Hope."

"It is one of the perversities of human nature that James Terry should prefer my trifling Cousin Fane to lovely Hope Duncan," soliloquized Miss Alice Ray at the close of a day of unusual vexation with this same cousin.

It was useless to remonstrate with her; worse than useless to attempt to impress her with a sense of the responsibilities she was about to assume.

There was a quiet wedding, at which only the immediate relatives of the parties were present, and the newly-wedded pair started on a short wedding tour. They were to board for the present, which was sufficient reason for not inviting their friends to visit them in a familiar way.

Months went by, and still the bride refused to entertain the idea of housekeeping, unless she could have plenty of servants to answer every requirement. She reproached her husband bitterly, whenever he proposed establishing such a home as they could afford.

"I am not a rich man," he said, one day, when the matter was under consideration. "All the capital I have is invested in my business; and if I am to succeed, I must, for a few years, add a large share of my profits to my working capital. In order to do that, it will be necessary to practice some economy. You can see that for yourself, my dear."

"I see nothing about business. I don't know anything about it, and I don't want to," replied the wife petulantly. "I don't know anything about economy either. You knew I didn't when you married me. If you had wanted a kitchen drudge for a wife, you should have married somebody else. I thought you loved me"; and then came the tears, which are always a weak woman's strongest appeal, and which closed the discussion.

Her calls for money were frequent, and if not gratified, her ill-temper made her husband ready to purchase peace at almost any price. Miss Alice Ray saw something of this and resolved to speak plainly. When told by her cousin of the past, when neither work nor economy was necessary, she answered:

"It *was* necessary. Both you and your father lived upon the property of others. He is a fugitive from justice on account of his dishonesty. These are hard things to say to you, but it is time some one told you the truth. You have a good husband, but he is by no

means a rich man. You can help him, or you can ruin him; and if you go on, as you have begun, it will be ruin for both of you. Tears count for very little," continued the speaker, foreseeing the shower about to fall. "Your husband needs and deserves a pleasant home, where he will meet a smiling welcome, and where his wife will make the most of what he provides."

"Has he been complaining of me?" asked Fane Terry with sudden animation.

"Not one word," was replied. "He is too loyal and true for that, but any one can see that you are not doing as you should. Your husband was a home boy, living close to his mother, and it was natural that when he married he should expect something of home happiness."

"He had no right to expect me to do as his mother did. She was just a kitchen drudge."

"Don't say that to James Terry, Fane. Don't call his mother by any such name in his presence. She was a noble woman; handsomer and more sought after when she was young than any other girl about here. Your father was one of the many who wished to marry her, and she refused him. If you are ever half as good and capable as she was, your husband will have cause for thankfulness."

"My father was a good deal better than the old drunkard who was her husband."

"That would be a matter of opinion, and is not to be considered now. There are other considerations which affect you more nearly. Your husband has a sister you have treated with the utmost indifference."

"Why shouldn't I? I didn't marry the whole fami

ly. I want my husband to myself. I don't like Anna Terry any better than she likes me. I have heard too much about her and that other paragon, Hope Duncan James ought to have married her."

"It would have been better for him if he had," responded Miss Ray, provoked to say what she knew she might afterward regret.

CHAPTER VII.

GOING WRONG.

JAMES TERRY was going wrong, although few had taken note of it. His wife thought him improving, because he no longer talked of housekeeping, and said little of her extravagance.

Yet it was true that he was going wrong. Thrown into the society of men less scrupulous than himself, he was fast losing the very characteristics which had recommended him to their favor.

For this his wife was largely responsible. When they were first married she attended church with him, but after a time she declined going, and he soon idled away the Sabbaths with her. She ridiculed him as old-fashioned and Puritanical in his notions, yet in a certain way she was proud and fond of him. Sometimes, when seeming to realize the possibility of losing his affection, she appealed to him as she had in the early days of their acquaintance. She still had power to charm him, even while he missed more and more the inspiring influence a noble woman would have exerted over him.

He was not living at his best, as he well knew, and as he felt most keenly when with his sister and brothers.

"I wish I had stayed here with you," he said to Joe Duncan during one of his short visits. "It would have been better for me in every way. You and Eben are

building up an independent business, while I am more or less dependent upon the caprices of the public. Eben is turning out a splendid man. I knew the place for him was in your family, and I hope you will conclude to adopt him for life."

"He seems like one of the family now," was replied. "He has a wonderful care for Anna and George. He is very ambitious for them too, and if necessary, he would work hard to meet their school expenses."

"Four years have made a great change in him. I can hardly realize that it is four years since I left you. The time has passed quickly."

"And happily too, I hope."

"I have no reason to complain. I fancy a boy's imagination colors life a little too brightly, so that few men realize all they have anticipated."

"That may be true, Jim, but we here expect every year to bring us some new happiness. Father and mother are renewing their youth, while Hope and I are doing some studying to make up for the deficiencies of our early education."

"I have never seen any deficiencies in either of you, but your library would tempt any one to study."

"We have only made a beginning in the way of a library. We intend to add to it from time to time, and so keep ourselves young by keeping our brains active."

"Haven't you any plans apart from this home, Joe?"

"Not any," answered the young man quickly. "Hope and I consider ourselves fixtures, and make our plans accordingly."

"Fixtures in a good place. The whole town is looking up. I met Grandfather Willey to-day, and he told

me that Mr. Dow has made two or three thousand dollars, so that he can do very well by his children."

"And he might have told you that Lizzie Dow is a remarkably bright girl. You remember how she used to whistle an accompaniment to fife and drum?"

"I do remember it, and I wish I could hear her whistle again. It is a long time since I have seen my fife, but I think I could manage to make my part of the noise."

"We might have a musical evening, Jim, and invite the Dows over here. Grandfather Willey would want to come too. He says he has listened a good many times to our playing as we drifted down the river. Come over to-morrow evening with your wife and Miss Ray, and I will make sure of the Dows."

"Thank you, Joe, I can promise for only one, but you will be sure to see me. I can't think of anything that would give me more pleasure than such an evening."

James Terry's wife was quite resolved that he should forego the anticipated pleasure, refusing to accompany him; yet he redeemed his promise, making also an engagement for the next evening at the Dows'.

The north-west room contained not only a piano and organ, with a sufficient quantity of music to satisfy any reasonable young lady, but it was otherwise handsomely furnished. Lizzie could whistle and play at the same time; and with the fife at her side, while the tap of the drum was heard on the piazza, the entertainment was as enjoyable as it was unique.

"This seems like old times, with an added zest," remarked James Terry. "I must acknowledge that the children are growing away from me. They no longer need Brother Jim's advice and assistance."

"Children will grow up, and we older ones must accept the situation," replied Joe Duncan. "But there is no reason for worrying about it; and besides, I am expecting good rather than evil. Twenty-eight is not a very advanced age, Jim."

"That is true, but some years count double. Anna, you have made excellent progress in your music," he added, turning to his sister, who came toward him.

"I am glad if you think so," she answered. "I have tried to do as well as I could, but I have not such a gift as Lizzie Dow. The music teacher says she is the best scholar he ever had. I believe she knows it all by intuition, while I work hard for all I learn. I hoped you would be satisfied with what I have done. I always think of you and try to do what will please you."

"You always please me, little sister."

"I hope I always shall. It is so delightful to have you with us. I grudge every moment as it flies. I wish you would come oftener and stay longer."

"I wish I could. I should like to stay with you all summer, but I must go back to my business."

"You won't forget mother and what she taught you, will you?" said the sister, tenderly. "Don't forget," she added, still more tenderly, when no reply was made. "She prayed for us all, but most for you, Jim, because you were her brave, good boy."

Here they were interrupted, and later there was only time for hasty good-nights. There was a stormy scene when James Terry returned to his wife at her uncle's. Having absolutely refused to go with him to the Dows', she had expected to keep him with her; and having failed in this, she had spent the evening in her chamber,

angry and mortified, becoming more excited as the time went by, until she was in one of her worst moods. In the morning they left, with but sorry explanation for their sudden departure, which, however, could not fail to be understood by those whose guests they were.

Not long after this a club-room was established near James Terry's place of business, and he was invited to share in its privileges. Once he would not have done it. Even then, a loving hand could have restrained him; but the loving hand was not extended. He was glad of some resort where his social nature would be recognized; and so long as he did not go back to his native town for friends and companionship, his wife saw no reason to interfere.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FOREGONE CONCLUSION.

ANOTHER addition had been made to the Duncan house; "broadening and heightening it," as the neighbors said. The two families occupying it seemed sufficient unto themselves, although they exercised a generous hospitality to friends both far and near.

After Joe Duncan and Eben Terry commenced business together, they soon established a reputation for promptness and fair dealing which was a fortune in itself. Their younger brothers were employed by them, and they had already made plans for greatly extending operations.

Two families in one, they had few separate interests; while over all, Hope Duncan was the presiding genius, to whom were confided the hopes and fears of those who, whatever else might claim their attention, regarded her happiness with the most tender solicitude.

James Terry had gone further away from them. Having received an advantageous offer to join a business firm in a large city, he had accepted it without consulting the friends who were now watching him eagerly.

"I wish Fane Ray had never come within a thousand miles of Jim," exclaimed Eben. "She will be the ruin of him."

"She can not ruin him if he stands up firmly for the right, as a Christian man should," responded Joe Duncan. "A man may be hampered, hindered, and made poor by others; but so long as he retains his own integrity, with a clear conscience before God, he can not be ruined."

"But all men are not like you, Joe; and when a man's foes are those of his own household, he must be very strong to stand against them. I am sure I could not have done it, if I had established my household when I was of Jim's age. I need somebody to restrain and help me. I think I will take Anna with me on my next business trip and call to see Jim."

"I am sure he will be glad to see you. His heart is in the right place, and we are not going to give him up because he does not live with us. Jim can not be dearer to you than he is to me, and we will hold him fast."

Eben stopped, with his sister, at the same hotel where his brother was boarding; and when they met, Mrs. Terry was compelled to acknowledge that her sister-in-law was an elegant young lady, whom it was desirable to treat with becoming civility.

"Little sister," said her brother, as she sprang to meet him, "I am glad you came with Eben. Now we shall claim a long visit from you, and we will live over some of the old days. You are looking remarkably well. I have been expecting an invitation to your wedding, although it seems only a short time since you were a child, running to meet me when I went home. You look like mother."

"I hope I shall be like her. She was so good, and loved us so much, I think nobody could be better."

While the brother and sister were thus engaged with each other, Eben Terry was talking with his brother's wife, who seemed to him less attractive than ever before. She was expensively dressed; but dress could not make up for the deficiencies of face and figure which were only too apparent.

She had never liked her companion, yet she had sufficient tact to know that it might be for her interest to maintain friendly relations with him. He was recognized as a rising man, and received the consideration which was his due. She claimed his escort to dinner, while her husband took in his sister.

There was wine upon the table, and as the eyes of the brothers met, there was no need of words to express their thoughts. It was left untasted by the family party, but Anna was reasonably certain that one, at least, afterward indulged in some stimulant.

Her brother was kind and attentive, yet she could not fail to see a marked change in his appearance. He looked more like his father, and was more restless than formerly.

"I am afraid Jim drinks wine," she said to her younger brother, in a faltering voice; as though it cost her an effort to speak of it. "I am afraid he and Fane both drink," she added.

"I am afraid they do," was replied.

"How can he do it! How can he, when he knows about father! Mother never thought of anything so dreadful. Why didn't she get him to promise never to touch a drop of liquor! He wouldn't have broken his promise. I know he wouldn't. I wish we could take him home with us. It can't be too late to save him. I

would go down on my knees to him if it would do any good."

"I will see what can be done," answered Eben, seeking to reassure his sister by a feigned cheerfulness; and in an interview a few hours after, when they were comparing notes, the younger brother said abruptly:

"Jim, I want you to sign a pledge of total abstinence from all kinds of intoxicating liquor. I wonder mother didn't exact such a pledge from every one of us. She must have known that children of such a drunkard as father was could never drink moderately. Perhaps some men can do it, but it is a foregone conclusion that we can *not*."

"Why is it a foregone conclusion?" was asked with some hesitation.

"Because we have a drunkard's blood in our veins," was replied. "I wouldn't trust myself to drink so much as a glass of wine. How do I know but the demon in me—it is there, Jim, and it is of no use to deny it—it would be roused from his sleep by the very first glass? I never have tasted a drop, and so long as I have my senses, I never will. Would you dare to do it, Jim? Would you?" persisted the questioner.

"I have done it, and I am not a drunkard," answered James Terry, looking away from his brother as he made this confession.

"Are you in the habit of drinking wine?" asked Eben.

"I drink a little occasionally; not enough to injure me. Every one here drinks for good-fellowship."

"And you dare to do it with your father's blood in your veins! How can you! You told me once that if

I ever drank liquor of any kind, I should do it at the peril of soul and body ; and when Hope Duncan asked me to pledge myself, I remembered your words, and they had their influence. Jim, you were the hero of my boyhood. I thought you the grandest brother in the world. I loved you then, and I love you now. We all love you. You will sign the pledge to please me, to please us, Jim. How would you feel if you knew George and I were in the habit of drinking wine occasionally ! What would you think if Joe Duncan should do it ! ”

“ He never will. You and George never will.”

“ And you ? Do sign the pledge, Jim.”

All that was good and noble in James Terry’s heart asserted itself ; and for a moment he was upon the point of yielding to his brother’s entreaties. But instantly there rose before him the complications of his life ; his surroundings as a business man, and the opposition he must encounter should he suddenly change his habits.

“ Eben, I know you mean well, and I thank you for the interest you feel in my welfare,” he said at length. “ I am thankful that you and George are strong teetotalers. I am sorry to deny your request, but all things considered, I think best not to sign your pledge. I can not explain to you all my reasons for this, but I hope you have confidence enough in me to believe that I consider them sufficient.”

“ And you won’t do it, Jim ? ” said Eben, in a tone of touching sadness.

“ Not now,” was answered in a voice which echoed the sadness.

"Are you quite decided, beyond the influence of argument or entreaty?"

"Quite," answered the elder brother; adding quickly, "And now let us talk of other things."

But Eben had lost his interest in other things. He did not need to tell Anna that his mission had been unsuccessful. She read it in his face, and the pleasure of the visit was at an end. She wished to go home, and the brother and sister who had loved each other so fondly, parted with a mutual sense of relief.

CHAPTER IX.

FAILED.

THREE years from the time of this parting Mrs. James Terry held in her hand a letter which she had read and re-read, until at last she comprehended its full import. Her father had written to her asking assistance, representing himself as suffering from absolute want.

He had been unfortunate in some of his late ventures, and as she was well married, he did not think it too much to ask her to send him a few hundred dollars, and so put him on his feet again. He wished to see her, and proposed that she should come to him, bringing the assistance he required. He might be running a risk in writing to her, but since he had, by chance, learned her address, he longed to hear some word directly from her. He knew she would never believe the false accusations made against him, and which had driven him into exile.

While Mrs. Terry was still holding the letter, her husband came in, and she gave it to him to read.

"I supposed your father was dead," he said, evidently annoyed by what he had read.

"I suppose you hoped he was dead," she answered.

"I don't know. Do you wish to go to him?"

"It would be a great trouble, and of course I could

not go without the money. Father was always good to me. He never denied me anything, and I should like to help him."

"I can not furnish the money. We have met with heavy losses, and are likely to go down with others."

"Always the same story," said Mrs. Terry. "I have heard it so much it has ceased to have any impression upon me, except to make me more tired of it. It is a way men have of talking to their wives when money is wanted. I was feeling wretchedly to-day, and this has quite upset me. But I promised to lunch with Mrs. Margot and Mrs. Winter, and I leave the whole responsibility with you."

James Terry made no reply to his wife. After she left the room he sat for an hour with his head supported by his hand, and his eyes closed. Then he arose, and going to a cupboard, poured out a glass of brandy and drank it.

He knew only too well that the ladies who were lunching together would sip their wine or champagne; his wife, perhaps, indulging more freely than her companions. The knowledge half maddened him; inspiring him, also, with a feeling akin to contempt for one he had so loved.

But other considerations claimed attention. The firm of which he was a member was upon the eve of insolvency. But one chance remained to them, and that so slight it was hardly to be taken into account. If they went down he would be penniless. In any event he could not continue his present style of living. His partners had retrenched, and he had lost in their estimation by not doing the same. He might ask assistance

of his brothers, but he would not involve them in the fortunes of a falling house.

The last struggle was at hand. If his fears were realized he must start anew, away from all with whom he had been associated. At whatever cost to himself he must do this. The struggle came, only to end in utter disaster.

"Failed!" cried Mrs. Terry, when told of what had occurred. "Failed!" she repeated. "You don't mean that you are poor, without any money?"

"I do mean it," replied her husband. "We must leave here at once. Fortunately, our board is paid for this week, and that will give us time to think what is best to be done. We must take some cheap rooms and live as plainly as possible."

"And you have brought me to this!" exclaimed the unreasonable woman. "What can I do, and what is father to do! I never can live in cheap rooms. How will this furniture look in cheap rooms!"

"This furniture will not go into cheap rooms. It must be sold. Fane, I have nothing. Can't you understand that?"

"I can't, and I won't," she answered. "My poor head, and poor father! What can I do!"

"Let us begin over again, my dear," said her husband, touched with pity for her genuine distress. "We have both of us made mistakes, and now let us begin over again."

"Begin what?" she asked excitedly. "I made my mistake when I married you. Joe Duncan is twice as smart as you are; rich, too, and I might have married him if I had played my cards right. I wish I had

People say he and Eben are going to be some of the richest men in the country."

The heartless words were spoken, but let us do the speaker justice. Even she would not have uttered them, except under the influence of some exciting drink. This, however, did not excuse her in the eyes of her husband. It only made her weakness and selfishness more apparent; confirming him, also, in his intention to go to some place where he was a stranger, and there begin anew.

Although his wife at first insisted that she would not leave the hotel, she soon found her social position so changed, that she was ready to go anywhere, rather than remain to meet the haughty glances and cold greetings of those who had once been flattered by her friendship.

They retained only the plainest of their furniture; such as could be easily packed for transportation, and went into cheap lodgings, to wait for the final settlement of business. A compromise was effected, by which a few hundreds of dollars could be divided among the members of the firm; and with his share in hand, James Terry, at the age of thirty-two, looked around for employment, by which he could provide for himself and wife.

While doing this Joe Duncan came to him and offered him a lucrative position in his native town.

"Thank you a thousand times for your kindness, but I can not go there," he replied. "It seems to me I would almost rather starve. You don't know, and I can't tell you, all that prevents my doing as you wish. I would give half the years of my allotted life if I had never left you; but it is too late to go back. I made my choice, and I must bide the consequences."

"You are going wrong, Jim," then exclaimed his friend in a voice full of emotion. "I can see it. We all know it. You once asked me, if I saw you going wrong, to reach out a hand to save you, and I promised you that I would. I am here to redeem my promise. Will you take my hand? Oh, Jim, it can not be that you have forgotten the days when, with fife and drum, we drifted down the river together?"

"No, Joe, I have not forgotten those days, and I never shall forget them. Next to my mother, you have been the best and truest friend I ever had. We drifted together, but when the right time came, you put your hands to the oars and rowed against the stream; while I have been always drifting. If I was free to go back with you, God knows I would, but I can not. Don't ask me the reason why, and don't, above all things, think me ungrateful. I have a little left, and I can work. Work will do me good, but I must work among strangers."

Failing the acceptance of his first proposal, Joe Duncan had another in reserve, which he now brought forward. The firm of Duncan & Terry, consisting of four members, would establish their friend and brother in a commission house, wherever he might choose to locate; allowing him a most generous percentage upon all sales he might make for them. This they did, with a full understanding that they might lose by the arrangement, and with a readiness to accept such loss should it fall upon them.

"Jim, you are not a teetotaler," said Joe Duncan.

"Not entirely," was replied.

"You are wrong in that; all wrong; especially wrong for one like you. You told me, once, there was hot blood in your veins, and——"

"I know it all, Joe, better than you can tell me. I have not tasted a drop of liquor for three weeks, and I never intend to taste it again."

"Then sign a pledge that you will not, Jim. I know you will keep your pledge, and all will be well. I have brought with me our family pledge. Come, dear old friend, be one with us in this matter. Why, Jim, I would give half I am worth to have your name on our pledge."

"I will think of it," answered James Terry, after a long silence, in which it seemed to his companion that the powers of good and evil fought for the possession of his soul. "I can not do it now, but you can trust me, Joe. I never told you a falsehood, and I would sooner die than be a drunkard."

Joe Duncan could say no more. The bounds had been fixed, beyond which he dared not go, lest he should defeat his own purpose. He remained in the city, in almost constant intercourse with his friend, until the latter had decided where to locate. He then went to this location himself, paying all expenses of removal, and superintending the opening of business.

Miss Alice Ray, who, by the death of her parents, had come into possession of their property, offered her cousin a home for a few months, but this offer was most ungraciously declined. She had no fancy for the dull old house, where her conduct would be sharply criticised. She would go with her husband, and although privately

complaining of what she was pleased to call their "meager accommodations," when in the presence of Mr. Duncan she made an effort to appear at her best.

Once more was James Terry entreated to make his salvation sure, and once more, with what seemed insane perversity, he refused to do so.

CHAPTER X.

A DOUBLE MARRIAGE.

A DOUBLE marriage united the Terry and Duncan families ; Amos Duncan marrying Anna Terry and Eben Terry marrying Lilla Duncan.

People wondered that James Terry was not present at the wedding, but he excused himself upon the plea of his wife's ill health and the demands of business. He sent long letters to the brides, with elegant presents, yet nothing could induce him to forego his first decision ; so that even on the marriage-day there was something of sadness mingled with the joy.

In the evening twilight, when a strange stillness brooded over the now deserted rooms, Hope Duncan and her brother sat in the library, talking of the past, and forecasting of the future.

"I wish there had been a third marriage," said the sister. "I should miss you more than words can express, but you ought to have a home of your own, Joe dear. I wish you to be happier than you can be, living as you do now. We shall soon get to be elderly people."

"When we will be company for each other," was responded. "If there is a wife waiting somewhere for me, I have not been apprised of the fact. At present I am fully occupied in congratulating my brothers and sisters. As for a home of my own, I feel myself enti-

tled to as much of this home as I choose to appropriate. The old house, with its nooks and angles, is dearer than any other could be. The boys can have new houses, while we cling to the old. If Jim was only settled near us, doing well, I should be perfectly satisfied, so far as our families are concerned. Eben and Amos deserve their wives, and that is saying enough in their praise. If Jim's wife was like them he would be an entirely different man, although that does not relieve him of the responsibility of his own life. He is going down fast, and it is impossible for us to prevent it."

"It is hard to say that, Joe dear."

"Hard as it is, it is true. There is a mystery about it I can not comprehend. Jim knows his danger, and his face bears the marks of dissipation, but no earthly power can prevail upon him to change his course."

"If he could be persuaded to come back to us, it seems as though there might be hope for him."

"No persuasion can have any effect. Eben says he shall do no more, except to wait for further developments."

"What if Eben should grow to be like him! Have you ever thought of that, Joe dear?"

"Indeed I have, Hope. I believe I have thought of every contingency; of the posterity that may be, in which there may appear some outcropping of the terrible habit. I am more and more convinced that at least one-quarter of the children of this generation must make a steady fight against inherited tendencies, if they would achieve anything really good or great. The moderate drinking of those who have gone before us is largely responsible for the reckless dissipation of the present day."

"And what of those who are to come?"

"God only knows. Eben Terry realizes his danger and is trying to live as a Christian should. George seems to be in no danger, and as long as neither of them taste the cursed stuff, they are certainly safe. As for ourselves, we ought to be abstainers to the end. Father says that when he and Levi Terry were young men, they drank together without thinking any more of it than of any other social enjoyment. He heard a lecture which set him to thinking of the matter, and at last decided him to drink no more. He tried to influence his friend to join him, but without effect. There was where their ways in life separated. Father has talked it all over with Eben more freely than he has with me."

"What if he should talk it over with Jim?"

"It would do no good; and besides, Jim would not allow it. He is growing sensitive, and almost irritable about it."

"And his wife?"

"Don't let us speak of her, Hope. I can only say that if she is not what men call a hard drinker, her looks belie her. I shall never give Jim up. I believe there will come a time when he will turn to me for help."

"You boys are helping him constantly."

"In the way of business. That we count as a part of our regular expenses. It is the only way we can keep Jim's head above water, and he is not going down as long as money will keep him afloat. Alice Ray told me to-day she had heard her uncle was living in the same city with his daughter, and she wished me to ascertain if it was true. I shall write to Eben about it."

James Terry was evidently unwilling to answer

his brother's questions; yet at last he acknowledged that his wife's father was not far away, adding:

"I know you won't betray the old man into the hands of his accusers."

"I know I won't either," was replied. "Of course you provide for him, Jim?"

"Well, yes. I couldn't refuse, although I told Fane I hadn't a cent I could really call my own. I shouldn't blame you if you should throw me overboard."

"We should blame ourselves, so don't speak of it."

Mrs. Terry greeted the bridal party cordially, proud of their relationship, yet rejoicing at their early departure. Of all things, she dreaded the presence of any one who had known her when she considered herself a charming young lady. The change in her personal appearance was so great that she could not but be aware of it. She was sensitive, too, in regard to her husband; fearful, also, of some calamity which might take him from her.

Misfortune had not taught her wisdom, or roused her from her indolence. On the contrary, every year added to her inefficiency and increased her exactions. Her father remonstrated with her; and when he learned of her intemperate habits, insisted upon a radical reform. He needed some stimulant himself; but, as he assured his daughter, he never went beyond a prescribed quantity.

When Miss Alice Ray became assured that her uncle was dependent upon the bounty of James Terry, she hastened to make provision for his support; claiming this as her right. That she might understand his wants, she visited him, finding him but a wreck of his former

self; sorry, if not penitent, for the past, and living in constant dread of exposure. He begged her to talk to Fane, whose condition he represented as most pitiful.

"I never expected we should come to what we have," he said. "Fane's husband is a poor man; getting to be more like his father every day, and she— Why, Alice, I can hardly speak the words, but she must give up drinking beer and ale. I have tried to have her go to housekeeping, so as to have something to take up her time, instead of gossiping with other women as idle as she is; but she won't hear to me. I have done wrong, but I loved Fane, and did all I could for her. I wanted money for her more than for myself, and it hurts me to see her as she is. She ought to be just in the prime of her life, but she is an old-looking woman, faded before her time. And her husband. It is a great pity about him. His brothers are smart. Fane made a mistake in marrying him."

"He was considered smarter than either of his brothers, and a kinder-hearted boy than he was never lived," replied Miss Ray. "He and Fane both made a mistake in marrying, but the mistake has fallen most heavily upon him."

"Perhaps it has," answered the unhappy man, with a sigh, adding soon after: "Anyway, I wish something could be done to make them different."

CHAPTER XI.

THE WHISTLER.

THE old days of Fife and Drum would return never more, but the little maiden who whistled an accompaniment to their music, whistled still. When she was at home, the Duncans and Terrys were often invited to spend an evening in the same north-west room she had once described as dark and cold, but which was now bright and warm with sunshine and glowing pictures.

The carpet her mother had feared would be faded had long ago given place to one of such mossy softness and richness of color as, alone, to change the entire aspect of the room. Piles and piles of music attested to the tastes of their owner. The dreams of Lizzie Dow's childhood tended to their fulfillment.

She earned money, too, which she spent freely at home, thus silencing the criticisms of those who had prophesied that her father would come to poverty, because of the extravagant sums spent upon her musical education. She was repaying him, better than in dollars and cents, in the consciousness that he had helped her to a life of usefulness and happiness.

The towns-people were very proud of her; very fond of her, too, for she gave to them of her best without stint. She sang in the village church, and in the social meetings, as sweetly as in crowded concert halls. If

funds were to be raised, she was ready to give an evening's entertainment, which was sure to be well patronized.

William Dow had a family around him, but his sister was the same to him she had ever been; one whose general ability was not to be questioned, and whose wishes were entitled to consideration. Hope Duncan regarded her as a younger sister, receiving her confidence and sharing in her ambitions.

"I have a part in so many lives, it seems to me, sometimes, I am getting more than really belongs to me," said this friend on one occasion.

"You have helped to mold so many lives that it seems to me you have done more good than any other person I know," was replied. "The talks we had together, child as I was, when you were confined to your room, did more for me then than all other influences. I used to think I should be willing to be sick, as you were, if I could only be like you."

"It was a hard discipline for me, but it would have been harder for you."

"I presume it would. Your sickness made me what I am now. You encouraged me to do everything daintily, as well as thoroughly. You told me it was worth while for me to whistle and sing as well as I possibly could; and when I could whistle a fair accompaniment to the fife and drum, I was more delighted with the achievement than I ever have been since. Joe and Jim praised me until they came very near upsetting my weak little head. Grandfather Willey, too, praised me. Dear old man! I am thankful he lived until I had won my first laurels."

"You have a great deal for which to be thankful, Lizzie. God has bestowed upon you one of His sweetest gifts."

"I know He has, dear friend, and not a day goes over my head in which I do not thank Him for it. Going from place to place, as I do, seeing the care-worn, anxious faces of so many women, my whole heart goes out in gratitude for my happy lot. The Pharisee's prayer, much as it has been condemned, is often upon my lips; not in a spirit of vainglory, but of pure thankfulness."

"I understand you, Lizzie. Our lot has been cast in pleasant places, and among loving friends. Your brother's wife is a dear friend."

"Very dear; and Will is so thoughtful for her. She can never feel that her life is dwarfed or narrowed by her home duties. He insists upon her reading or studying, some part of every day; and young as they are, the children are catching the spirit of their parents."

"When you are married, you must have a husband as considerate and thoughtful as your brother."

"I have no plans in that direction, Hope. I could not give up my music, which will take a large part of my life; and it must be an exceptional man who would be satisfied with what remains."

"In marrying you, he would marry an exceptional woman who, because of one great gift, is richer in all gifts. You would not be satisfied with ordinary goodness in a husband."

"That is true. If married, I could not endure life except with a man whom I could trust without a shadow of doubt, and whose perfect integrity was beyond suspicion. Above all things, he must be a teetotaler to the last

degree, and from principle too. The use of intoxicating liquors is the bane of our country; and I have been horrified, more than once, to see how much it is used by men and women who really consider themselves morally upright. The same stimulant is given to produce strength, and to give rest; to keep people awake, and to put them to sleep. I have become acquainted with musicians and singers who were breaking down, not from overtraining and overwork, but from actual dissipation."

"It is terrible, Lizzie. I sit here, at home, thinking about it, and wishing I could do something to prevent it, but I am powerless."

"Not so, Hope. You have great influence. Every woman who stands up strongly and faithfully for total abstinence has great influence. Eben Terry says he owes what he is to you, and he is respected by all who know him. If only Jim had stayed here! Poor Jim! Hope, did you ever think if you could have him all by yourself, where you could talk to him for an hour, you could induce him to give up his intemperate habits?"

"I used to think so, but I know now that my words would be wasted."

"Then I, certainly, could do him no good; but it has seemed to me that if I could first flood his heart with old memories, by singing some familiar song, I could afterward plead with him so eloquently, he must yield to my persuasions."

"If you could do that, Lizzie, it would be the grandest work of your life; but we have ceased to expect it."

CHAPTER XII.

SO SORRY.

THE hall was filled with a large and appreciative audience, to listen to the singer whose coming had been heralded weeks before.

Strong, clear, and sweet was the voice which, one moment, rang out like a deep-toned bell, and the next, was hushed to whispered softness. The most difficult music was rendered faultlessly; yet best of all were the homely, simple ballads, which found some answering chord in every breast.

Encore followed encore, until several additions had been made to the printed programme; when, to close, the singer seated herself at the piano, playing an accompaniment to her singing, in close imitation of the music of a fife and drum. At this, a man occupying a back-seat leaned forward to listen, as if fearful of losing a single sound; and being observed, an added pathos was given to the words sung.

A storm of applause burst from the audience; and under its influence the singer resumed her seat at the piano. Again, and with greater effect than before, a similar accompaniment was played to a song which had always been a favorite with James Terry. The singer had seen him, and now sang for him alone; her whole

soul going out in a great longing to stir the deepest fountains of his heart.

When the concert was over, in an ante-room a small group was gathered around a man who had been brought there from the hall, where he was supposed to have fallen in a fit.

"It is Terry," remarked one of the group. "He represents an honorable house, but he is no better than a drunkard. He has probably taken a glass too much. Better send him home, if anybody knows where that is. He seems to be regaining consciousness, so he can give his own orders."

"Please allow me," said Lizzie Dow, who on her way through the room had heard the familiar name and came nearer. "The gentleman is one of my townsmen; an old friend, with whom I have played and sung many a time. Jim, I am sorry you are ill," she added, addressing him as she had been wont to do.

He made an effort to speak to her, but found it impossible to do so. He could not command his voice; yet his silence was more eloquent than any words would have been. She gave him her address, asking him to call upon her in the morning, and then followed her attendant.

She was to leave the city the next day at noon, and counting this as her opportunity, she waited impatiently for the appearance of James Terry, until convinced that he would not call. Resolving, however, to see him, if possible, she went to his place of business. Here the clerk informed her that he was probably at home; and giving directions to the hackman, she was carried there.

Mrs. Terry was in, but the woman who answered the bell was not sure that she was able to see company.

"Is Mr. Terry here, and can I see him?" asked Lizzie Dow.

"He is in his room, but he is not well," was replied.

"Will you tell him that an old friend wishes to see him, and that I have only a short time at my command?"

"Yes, ma'am, I will," answered the woman, leading the way into a plainly-furnished room on the first floor.

After waiting here for full half the time allotted to her call, James Terry came in, looking pale and haggard.

"I thought it might be you," he said, extending his hand to meet hers, which was at once outstretched.

"My wife is not able to see you this morning, and as you can see, I am half sick myself; but I could not let you go away without telling you how much I enjoyed your singing last evening. You deserve great praise for having made the most of your talents. My congratulations are worth little, but such as they are I offer them to you."

"Thank you, Jim—I must call you by the old name—I know of no one whose congratulations would be more to me. Do you remember the first time I whistled an accompaniment to Fife and Drum?"

"I am not sure that I do."

"I am sure that I do. All the applause of last evening was nothing to me, compared with the praises you and Joe showered upon me then. You were the hero of my childhood, Jim, and Hope Duncan was the angel."

"Hope Duncan was always an angel of goodness, and always will be."

"True, indeed, and many shall rise up to call her blessed. She has made Eben what he is, and Lilla will finish the work so well begun. You ought to go back, to make one of the delightful family parties. The drum is ready to beat an accompaniment to the fife."

"The fife is out of tune, while the drum responds to every tap. It is too late, Lizzie, for me to go back. I can only go on to the end, whatever that end may be."

"Jim Terry, I must speak plainly to you. I have thought of you and prayed for you, until it has seemed to me I could say something to influence you to come back to your early faith. Why, Jim, think what you were to your mother, and to your brothers and sister; and now, you are ruining yourself, soul and body, as your father ruined himself. You know this, and your friends know it. Stop now, I implore you, this very day, this very hour. Pledge yourself now to put away forever the cursed drink, and live, as God intended you should live, one of the grandest and noblest of lives. Speak to me, Jim, and say that you will do this."

In the intensity of her feelings she had spoken hurriedly; and now, as she paused, she was half terrified at the emotion she had evoked. She trembled for the reason of the man before her; whose face alternately flushed and paled, and whose lips moved convulsively, while they gave forth no sound. At length he regained something like composure, and with streaming eyes, said:

"It is useless to think of me or pray for me. The die is cast. My fate is sealed. I can not turn back."

Do you suppose I choose to be what I am, while my old friends are winning for themselves wealth and fame? You should know me better than that, Lizzie. Don't talk to me of my father. If he had died before he had ever seen my mother, there would have been one less doomed man upon the earth."

"Don't blame your father, Jim Terry. If you had never tasted the cursed drink, you would not be a drunkard, were he ten times the drunkard that he was."

"I know it; I know it!" answered the unhappy man, with a deprecating gesture, as if to ward off a threatened blow. "You can't tell me anything about it that I don't know, and I can tell you nothing more than you see."

"You are not angry with me?" said his visitor questioningly.

"No, not angry," he replied. "I believe I am never angry now. I am past that; past everything but being sorry. I am so sorry for all that has come to me the last ten years. It might have been different, but it is too late now to change."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END.

EVERY detail of Lizzie Dow's interview with James Terry was reported to Joe Duncan, who listened earnestly and sadly.

"I can not help feeling that there is something holding Jim fast," he said. "I don't know what it is, but I feel its presence whenever I am with him."

"I felt it, myself; and as I left him, it half seemed to me that I heard a mocking laugh at my disappointment," replied the young lady. "I am afraid there is no hope for him."

"I have ceased to expect any change. I am only waiting for the end, and that must come soon at the latest. Jim Terry can not endure what his father did, and besides, there is a double strain upon him."

"I know there is, poor fellow. It was one of my childhood's plans that he should marry Hope. She could have made him all he should be. She could hold a man to his best without any especial effort, and that is what few women can do. I could not do it. A man must do that for himself, or he can not have my confidence."

"Most people need encouragement. We are none of us likely to do our level best, unless some one manifests an interest in our welfare."

"I know that. I am always thinking of my friends, and imagining what they will say of me. Your sister Hope is a real inspiration to me."

"And Hope's brother?" said the gentleman, with a light in his brown eyes his companion had not seen there before.

"Hope's brother has been my friend ever since I can remember," she replied, with an embarrassment at which she wondered.

"Will you allow me to be your best and dearest friend? Can you trust your happiness in my hands?" he asked, coming nearer to her. "I think I must have loved you all these years."

How he further told his love, and what answers he received, does not matter to us; but when it was known that Joe Duncan was to marry Lizzie Dow, no one presumed to question the fitness of the union. She could safely trust in his honor and integrity; while she soon learned that in giving all, she yet retained all. Congratulations were tendered them on every hand, and the singer sang more sweetly than ever before.

In all this happiness, however, James Terry was not forgotten. The business, of which he had the nominal management, was then almost entirely in the hands of a trustworthy clerk, who reported to his employers whatever was of importance for them to know. It was he who telegraphed the news of Mrs. Terry's sudden death, which news was conveyed at once to Miss Ray.

The brothers went on, immediately, to attend the funeral of their sister-in-law, accompanied by her cousin, who was now more anxious for the living than for the dead. Few questions were asked; but these few elicited the

fact, that the woman lying in her coffin had died of *delirium tremens*; another victim to the terrible habit of dram-drinking.

At her father's request she was carried to his native town for burial; and unwilling as was her husband to go there, he could not refuse. Once there, he was not allowed to leave, as he had intended, when the funeral services were over.

Yielding to the persuasions of Joe Duncan, he accompanied this friend home; and that very night, a long-threatened malady laid its detaining hand upon him. Physicians were summoned, and all that love or medical skill could do for him was done; but his days were numbered. He might live for weeks, possibly for months, or he might die within a few hours.

When told of this he manifested little surprise. It was what he had expected, what he had known must be, yet he had hoped to close his life among strangers.

"Please leave me alone with Joe," he said, after a silence broken only by the sobs of his sister. "I wanted no one but you," he whispered to his old comrade, when his request had been granted. "I want you to pray for me, a poor sinner, and ask God to have mercy on my soul. I am verily guilty for what I have done; but the guilt is not all mine, and God knows how to make allowance for me."

The prayer which followed, and upon which seemed to hang all his hopes of forgiveness, was to him like a helping hand outstretched to save. He drank in every word, realizing something of the love which gave it utterance, and the faith which made this utterance possible.

“You have done me good,” he said, as his friend arose and bent over him. “I have something to tell you before I die, and it will be better that I should tell you soon. I want you all to think of me as kindly as you can when I am gone.”

“We have always thought of you kindly, Jim, never unkindly. We have thought it strange that we could not have more influence over you, but there was no unkindness in our hearts.”

“I must explain what has seemed so strange to you, Joe. It looks different to me now from what it has, but it is all the explanation I can make.”

It was all told, with many interruptions and much hesitation; told for once, never to be again mentioned until the grave had closed over him who thus revealed the secret of his life.

When he was a boy, as his friend well knew, he had been subject to fits of depression and restless craving for some new excitement. As he grew older, with so much of responsibility resting upon him, he had little time to indulge in morbid feelings; yet even then the same craving often made him despondent. At length he began to fear that he had inherited his father's appetite for strong drink, although it was only at intervals that it asserted itself, and then in a somewhat vague manner. This was the “hot blood” in his veins, of which he had spoken years before, and which had proved his ruin.

He had first tasted wine at a wedding, where, with others, he drank the bride's health, without a thought of the consequences of this act until too late. The festivities over, he rushed to gratify the appetite which then held sway over him.

When he recovered from the effects of this indulgence he went about his business as usual, and, strangely, felt no recurrence of the craving for weeks. When it returned, however, all else was forgotten in the mad longing he had not power to resist. Repeated indulgence strengthened the appetite, making its demands more frequent and more importunate; while in his sane moods he loathed himself for his weakness.

"Hundreds of times I resolved to conquer the appetite, and sometimes I thought I had conquered it," said James Terry, still clasping the hand of his friend. "But my defeat was sure in the end, and at last I gave up the struggle. You can never know what I suffered when you urged me to sign your pledge. Every appeal made to me to change my course of living pierced to my very soul; but I dared not perjure myself, and I knew that when the spell was upon me I should break a thousand pledges to quaff the liquid fire which was consuming me.

"The appetite was like a tiger tearing at my vitals, to be appeased only with alcoholic liquor. With your will and determination, Joe, I should have won in the fight; but when I left you I left a staff and stay I have missed ever since.

"Lying here on my death-bed, I blame no one but myself for my wasted life; yet if my father had not left me the legacy of a drunkard's appetite I should not be what I am now. I know that, as surely as I know that if I had never tasted any intoxicating drink, I should not be here.

"Tell the boys about it when I am gone, and tell them, too, that there is no safety for them or for their chil-

dren, except in total abstinence from everything which can intoxicate. There is no safety for any one except in such total abstinence. I am thankful I have no children, and I charge you, old friend, that my ruin be made a warning to all who shall come after me with a drop of my father's blood in their veins.

"Now pray with me again. Then let them all come in. It will not be for long that I shall see them."

The time was short indeed, yet long enough for those who watched beside him to witness something of the madness which tortured him, as he shrieked and begged for the drink which alone could give him relief.

Two cousins now answer to the names of "Fife" and "Drum," strong, sturdy boys, who, with others of their kindred, stand once each year by the grave of "Uncle Jim," to renew there the pledge to "touch not, taste not, handle not the accursed drink."

A JOLLY TIME.

A JOLLY TIME.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRIGHT SIDE.

"THAT sounds just like you, Carl. You always did look on the dark side. You never seemed to see the fun of anything. I remember what a sermon you preached us boys when we invited you to visit Mr. Barnard's melon-patch. Melons and fun were all we wanted, but you talked as if we had proposed highway robbery."

"I remember about that, too, and somebody paid dear for melons and fun. According to my ideas, they cost more than they came to, and the cost fell upon those who had not been consulted beforehand. I intend to look on both sides of a question."

"There you go again. I wonder you didn't study theology and set up for a preacher. You would have made a tip-top one, enforcing precept by example."

"Then you give me credit for consistency, Loren."

"Yes ; you practice what you preach. There can't anybody deny that. You are a first-rate fellow, too, if you are behind the times. What is the use of moping here by yourself, when you could join a jolly lot of fellows and go in for a good time !"

"I never mope, Loren. I read, or study, or write ;

and time goes so fast with me, I am surprised every evening to find it is gone."

"Well, every one to his taste; but I should get the blues, if I was shut up here for a single evening."

"This is not a blue room."

"You are right there, Carl. It looks as though a girl had been here arranging things. Pressed ferns, autumn leaves, and plumes of golden rod! Where did you find them?"

"Two miles away, in one of the coziest nooks imaginable. I have visited it every week through the summer and fall. I couldn't afford to take a vacation in the regular way, so I took it in installments, and enjoyed it all the more for my long walks. I saw a great many plants and flowers that were new to me."

"I remember, now, that you were an enthusiastic botanist; while I never could see any sense in pulling flowers to pieces to find out how they were put together. I like them well enough to wear a button-hole bouquet, when a pretty girl gives it to me, but it makes no difference to me what order they belong to. I prefer something more substantial."

"As beer and cigars, with perhaps a glass of champagne."

"Exactly. I have a fancy for the good things of life, and a good cigar is a real luxury."

"It may be to you, but I choose a flower."

"All right. You can pay your money and take your choice. But you won't deny that an oyster supper is one of the things to be enjoyed."

"Indeed, I won't. I cooked an oyster supper, and served it, too, last evening in this room. I had two guests,

who said they never ate anything half so good before. So, you see, I understand about oysters."

"But you want something to go down with the oysters."

"We had coffee and crackers. Making coffee is one of my accomplishments. I always made it when I was at home. Spend the evening with me, and you shall have some as good as the best."

"Thanks ; but I am booked for Carney's. Wish you would go with me ; but, if you won't, I must go without you. I thought I could persuade you. You ought to have gotten rid of some of your country notions in the last year."

"Country notions, as you call them, are going to stick by me. But I won't preach any more. I don't wish to tire my audience. You have half an hour before your appointment at Carney's, and you may as well spend it here."

"Yes ; I don't care to get there before the rest do."

"Then sit down again, and tell me what you hear from home."

"That reminds me I have a letter in my pocket that I took from the office yesterday morning. I have been so busy, I haven't had time to read it, and, with your permission, I will read it now."

"Do so. A letter from home would have burned a big hole in my pocket long before now if it had been unread. I would sooner go without my dinner than neglect such a letter."

"That was the way with me at first, but I am pretty well weaned by this time."

"Weaned from home, do you mean?"

"Well, no ; not exactly. Of course I think of home

and care for it, but I don't have much time—— There, Carl, I know what is on the end of your tongue, and you may as well speak it out."

"I might be preaching, if I did; and you don't like preaching. But I am detaining you from your letter."

Loren Parsons glanced down the first page of the closely-written sheet, and then refolding it, returned it to his pocket, with the remark:

"It is from Noll, and he is almost as much of a preacher as you are. He has the faculty of looking on the dark side, while I am bound to keep my eyes on the bright side. His letters are full of all sorts of good advice. I suppose Aunt Keziah puts him up to it; but he is altogether too old for his years."

"He is a remarkably fine boy," responded Carlton Briggs. "Everybody speaks in his praise; and it wouldn't be strange if he should look on the world from a higher stand-point than you or I shall. He may preach to us both from a pulpit."

"Deliver me from such an affliction! Aunt Keziah may have all the glory. Noll ought to have been a girl. He never was made to fight his way through difficulties."

"There will be no need of his fighting. That young brother of yours will make his way where many would turn back discouraged. He can work, and wait for the result of his labors."

"He is persevering and industrious. I know that. If he wasn't, he never would write such long letters."

"I hope you write as long ones in return, Loren. He was very lonely after you left him, and a letter from you was a real treasure to the boy. He has a very loving

heart, and, except your Aunt Keziah, you are almost his only relative."

"I know it. It is rather hard on him, but I never was much given to writing letters, and, besides that, I don't know what to say to such a fellow as Noll. The fact is, Carl, I want something jolly going on where I am. That is why I like an oyster supper at Carney's. We are sure to have a jolly time."

CHAPTER II.

TEN TIMES TEN.

"GOOD-EVENING; glad to see you," said Carlton Briggs, as he opened the door of his room to admit his old school-mate. "I was just thinking of you. A long letter from mother and the girls sent my thoughts back to old-time friends, and, of course, you were included. Take a seat in my home-made lounging-chair, and see how you like it."

"This is comfortable," said the visitor, after accepting the proffered seat. "How in the world you manage to get so much out of your salary is a mystery to me. Why, I believe you are handy as a girl."

"Somewhat handier with saw, hammer, and nails. A dry-goods box has great capabilities, if one only knows how to utilize it to the best advantage. I couldn't afford an expensive covering, so was obliged to content myself with something cheaper. There is my book-case, too. I have just finished that."

"It is very nice, and you have quite a library already. Where in the world do you get money for such things?"

"Earn it. They don't cost much except the work. Noll is always doing something of the kind."

"Noll is a queer fellow anyway."

"How is he queer?" asked Carlton Briggs, looking

sharply at his companion, who evidently shrank from his gaze.

"I can't tell exactly, only he is different from any other boy I ever knew. He seems almost as old as Aunt Keziah herself."

"He has a wise head on his shoulders. No one can deny that ; yet he enjoys boyish sports with a keen relish. Of course you know he has taken the first prize in school ; and if there was a prize offered in Sunday-school for the best Bible-lessons, he would be sure to take that. I hope there will be a way for him to go through college."

"I don't know of any way, unless Aunt Keziah has an old stocking somewhere full of gold."

"You might do something toward it, Loren ; and you couldn't spend your money for a better purpose. You have a much larger salary than I have, and I find it possible to save a little every month."

"I don't ; so there's the difference. When I get promoted, with my salary doubled, it will be time enough to think of saving. It is all I can do now to make the ends meet, and sometimes I can't do that. Money gets through my fingers almost without my knowing it. I suppose it is natural to me. I never could count pennies."

"I can. I learned that when I was a very small boy ; and—your pardon, Loren—I know that ten times ten make one hundred."

"Which means, I suppose, that ten cigars cost a dollar."

"They do, if one cigar costs a dime."

"One does cost a dime, such as I smoke. If there is anything I detest it is a coarse, strong cigar. I want everything of the best."

"I want everything as good as I can afford, but I don't want cigars of any kind, any more than I want beer or whisky."

"That means me, I suppose."

"I was talking of myself."

"And leaving me to apply it to myself. I understand it; but I can't afford to quarrel with you, especially as I came to ask a favor of you. The truth is, Carl, I am hard up for money. Our little affair at Carney's proved more expensive than I calculated. The oysters were good, and so was the champagne; too good, I guess. There was a heavy bill to pay for damages to furniture, and I had to pay my share, although I could take my oath that I had nothing to do with it. I borrowed of a friend there, and now he has come down on me; and here I am with less than a dollar in my pocket. It won't do to ask for an advance on my salary. I have done that once, and I can't do it again. It would be as much as my place is worth."

"I should think it would," said Carleton Briggs a little coldly.

"I might apply to Aunt Keziah for a loan, but she would ask too many questions and preach too many sermons," responded Loren Parsons, ignoring his companion's mood.

"She would be very likely to give you some advice."

"And that is just what I don't want. She is a good woman in her place, but she knows nothing of the world and what is expected of a young man."

"She has excellent judgment, Loren. Everybody says that, and if she had not been doing for others all her life, she would be a rich woman. As it is, she is obliged to

calculate closely to make sure of a support in her old age."

"I know she has done a good deal for Noll and me, but she had the homestead with everything on it."

"She has paid for it twice over. Your grandfather mortgaged it and she redeemed it. Then she mortgaged it again to raise money for your father, and it is less than two years since she managed to clear that off."

"How do you know all that, Carl Briggs?"

"It is no secret. Everybody in town knows it, and knows, too, that she has economized in her own personal expenses, that she might give you and Noll a home. If I were in your place, I would do anything honest rather than ask her for a cent of money."

"I am sure I don't want to; but I don't know where the money is coming from unless you lend it to me. I will pay you as soon as I can earn it."

"How much do you need?"

Loren Parsons named the very sum Carlton Briggs had saved to send to his father, who, although a poor man, and almost an invalid, had managed to give him a good business education. He could send this amount home, and still provide himself with comfortable clothing for the winter. He needed a new overcoat. Indeed, on several occasions, he had been quite ashamed of this garment, which he had really outgrown, and which no amount of sponging could renovate. He thought of all this, before replying to the young man, who, with twice his salary, had come to ask of him a loan.

"I will tell you how I am situated," he said, at length; and then, speaking frankly, allowed his companion to see what a sacrifice it would be on his part to grant the desired loan.

"It is too bad to take a cent of your money, and I shall feel mean to do it," replied Loren Parsons. "You have appropriated every cent of it to good purposes, and you ought to keep it. But I don't know where else to go for help, and my reputation is at stake. I will certainly pay you a part of it when I draw my next month's salary, and the rest shall be forthcoming as soon as possible. You said your father did not expect any money from you at present, so it will make no difference with him if he gets it a month later. As for the overcoat, you can get trusted, and I advise you to buy one directly. The one you have been wearing is a shabby old thing."

"I know it is; but I never run in debt."

"I wish I didn't. I shall appreciate your kindness, Carl; and if I can ever do you a favor, you may count on me to the end of the chapter."

The money so much desired was given to him, he signing a note for the same, and as he placed it in his pocket-book, he assured his friend that it should be repaid at the earliest possible moment.

"I hope it will," was responded. "I shall send to my father as I had intended, and wait for an overcoat until I can pay for it."

"You shall!" exclaimed his debtor, in a tone expressing the utmost surprise.

"Certainly, I shall. I have a right to deny myself for you, but I have no right to fail of my duty to my parents. They know I will do all I can for them, and they must not be dissatisfied."

Loren Parsons rose from the chair in which he had been sitting, stood irresolute for a moment, and then, with a hasty good-evening, left the room.

CHAPTER III.

NOLL'S DISAPPOINTMENT.

"AUNT KEZIE, what do you suppose is the reason Loren don't write to me. I was almost certain I should get a letter to-day, and I was so disappointed, I came near crying right out in the post-office," said Oliver Parsons, as he came into the kitchen, where his aunt was preparing supper.

"I am very sorry for your disappointment, Ollie, but it would do no good to cry over it," she replied, with an effort to speak cheerfully. "People away from home don't always realize how anxious their friends are to hear from them. You have heard that no news is good news; so, Ollie, we will make the most of what we have, and hope for better in the future. That is the way my mother used to talk to me when I felt troubled."

"But, auntie, Carl Briggs writes a long letter home every single week, and tells all about everything he does; so they know almost as well as if they saw him. Loren never does so. His letters are always short. Auntie, sometimes I am afraid Loren isn't as good as he ought to be. He don't go to Sunday-school, and I am afraid he don't go to meeting very often. Wouldn't it be dreadful if he should smoke, and drink, and play cards, and spend his money for what he ought not to?"

"Why, Ollie, what dark surmises! Let us look on the bright side. I want to talk with you about our wood lot. I had an offer this afternoon for some standing timber; and I thought if it should be pleasant to-morrow afternoon we would go and look at it, and make up our minds about it. We must mark the trees, too, that we are going to have cut for firewood.

"That will be nice, auntie; and I may as well take a sack with me to hold any stray nuts we can find. I know there are lots of them among the dry leaves. Let us go early, so to have plenty of time."

"Yes, we will. I have been wondering how it would do to try to get along with one fire, this winter, except when we have company or extra work. This room is pleasant, and we could sell a few dollars' worth of wood instead of burning it in the sitting-room. We must begin to save toward your college expenses."

"You are the dearest auntie in the world, to do so much for me; but I mean to work my own way through college. If I can only get fitted, I know I can get through. Mr. Ellinwood says he will hear me recite in Greek and Latin, this winter, and I have saved money enough from what I earned last summer to buy my books. So that is all settled; and I shall do something for Mr. Ellinwood to pay him for his trouble. Besides that, auntie, I am going to do the chopping here at home. You know I cut down one tree last spring. I know how. I mean to do all the work this winter; and you needn't hire a man for anything unless I get where I can't go any further. I don't care about two fires, when we have only ourselves. We can have the little round table in here, and hang up some shelves in the corner for books and papers."

"But when will you study, Ollie, if you work all the time?"

"O auntie, I am not going to work all the time; but I want to see what I can do for myself. I shall be very systematic."

The two sat down to a plain supper, still talking and planning in regard to work and expenses for the winter; but all this did not make Noll Parsons forget his disappointment at not hearing from his brother.

"Aunt Kezie, if you are willing, I am going to write to Carl Briggs, and ask him about Loren," he said, after he had brought out the little round table from the sitting-room.

"I am willing you should write to Carl, but I would be careful not to say anything as if you blamed Loren," replied the good woman."

"I won't, auntie. How could I blame him, when he is all the brother I have, and I love him almost better than I do myself. But Carl always sends me some message in every one of his letters, and he said he was very glad I got the prize. I wish Loren was like him. I can ask him if he ever sees Loren, can't I?"

"Yes; there can be no harm in that."

"Then I will write to him this very evening; but I do hope I shall hear from Loren to-morrow."

The letter was written; a long letter, too, in which the boy poured out all his heart, except in regard to his brother; yet it was plain to the recipient of this epistle that he was sadly troubled.

Carlton Briggs did not often call upon his old school-mate. They had few tastes or sympathies in common;

and, moreover, the latter, when at his boarding-place, was likely to be surrounded with young men even more objectionable than himself. But pity for Noll, and a desire to remind the recreant brother of some neglected duties constrained him to lay aside his usual reserve.

"Mr. Parsons is in his room," said the girl who answered the bell, and upon rapping for admittance to this room he was bidden to "come in."

"Excuse me, Carl, I thought—I thought it was somebody else," said Loren Parsons, laying down a hand of cards and speaking with manifest embarrassment. "I am glad to see you. Take a seat. We are a little crowded here, but you know there is always room for one more."

"Thank you; I can not stay to sit," was replied. "I received a letter from Noll in which I thought you might be interested; but, as you are engaged, I will not interrupt you. Good-evening."

"Stay, Carl," called the discomfited host, just as he reached the street door. "Thank you for remembering me, and I will see you to-morrow evening."

"What a prig he is," said one, as the hand of cards was retaken and the game went on.

"A smart fellow for business, and would be good-looking if he dressed decently," said another. "His overcoat looks as though it came out of Noah's ark. Miserly, perhaps."

"Not a bit of it, now," exclaimed Loren Parsons, ashamed to keep silence while a true friend was thus maligned. "Carl Briggs was always a generous hearted fellow, ready to lend a helping hand when he could, and he hasn't changed either. The whole family are generous, although

it was always a mystery to me how they managed to provide for themselves, to say nothing of what they did for others."

"Never mind about Briggs. Likely he is well enough, but talking about him won't finish our game ; and, for my part, I want to know who is going to pay for the oysters."

CHAPTER 1V.

THE OLD COAT.

TRUE to his promise, Loren Parsons called upon his friend, the next evening, although strongly tempted to go elsewhere.

"I was ashamed to come, and more ashamed to stay away," he said, after the ordinary greetings had been exchanged. "The truth is, Carl, I had no idea of entertaining company, last evening, until Dustin told me they were coming in to have a game of cards. I intended to see you and make a respectable payment on my debt ; but luck was against me, and my pocket-book was depleted as usual. I don't know what you will say to it."

"If I should say anything, it might sound to you like preaching, and you don't enjoy preaching."

"Can't say I do ; but I deserve to hear a good, sharp sermon. You wore your old overcoat."

"I have no other, and the evening was chilly."

"Did you send money to your father?"

"I did; and received such thanks in reply, that I would rather wear my old coat five years than have missed them."

"You are a queer fellow to feel so. For my part, I want to dress as well as the next man. I have a few dollars for you this evening, and you shall have the rest as

soon as I can get it for you. Don't you find it the easiest thing in the world to get into debt?"

"I am careful never to get into debt. I should live in a garret, and do my own cooking and washing before I would be in debt; and I advise you to get out, as fast as possible, at any cost."

"I wish I could; and when my salary is raised, I expect to; but now I am obliged to manage every way to keep my credit good. There is what I have for you, Carl; and believe me, I am sorry and ashamed that it is no more. I hope, however, that on the strength of that, and my promise for the future, you will buy an overcoat. Any dealer will be glad to give you credit."

"I am not disposed to put my credit to the test in that way. Besides, I never know what calls may be made upon me from home. I wonder if you appreciate your good fortune, Loren, in having such a correspondent as Noll. I have a long letter from him, full of news, and not a dull line in it. He is intending to do all the farm work this winter, besides studying Greek and Latin. He is to recite to Mr. Ellinwood."

"Then he will be sure to tell me all about it. And that makes me think that I have not answered his last letter. Did he say anything about it?"

"No. He asked me if I saw you often, and that was all; but I know your silence grieves him. Write to him now this very evening. I have some studying to do, and you can write while I study. Here is plenty of room for us both at the table."

Loren Parsons could not well refuse to do this, and therefore it was that he accepted an irksome task. The letter written was by no means what it should have been,

yet it would be highly prized. As it was folded and placed in an envelope, Carlton Briggs asked :

“Are you expecting to take Edson’s place when he leaves?”

“I expect it, of course. It will belong to me by right ; so I am counting on a better salary. I suppose, then, if I follow the general rule, I ought to save something toward setting up housekeeping.”

“I suppose most young men look forward to having a home of their own.”

“Very young men are likely to have such aspirations. I used to think more about it than I do now. A bachelor’s life is a jolly life ; and until I am richer than I am now it will suit me better than a life burdened with family cares.”

“It is good for a man to have some cares, and feel that others are dependent upon him. Why, I should not care to live, unless my life counted for some one besides myself. You have Noll and your Aunt Keziah ; two you can make very happy by just doing the best for yourself ; and, Loren, you would make them very wretched if you should disappoint their expectations.”

Something in his companion’s manner had irritated Loren Parsons when they first met that evening, and this last remark called forth the exclamation :

“What are you driving at ? Speak out the worst of it ! You look at me as though I had committed an unpardonable sin.”

“Not unpardonable ; but, as a friend, I tell you that you are ruining your chances of getting on in the world,” replied Carlton Briggs. “Men like Mr. Talbot keep a sharp lookout for those in their employ, and he knows

that you are spending more money than your salary warrants."

"How does he know it? Have you turned informer?" was responded angrily. "What do you know of Mr. Talbot?"

"I know that to-day he offered me Edson's place."

"He did! He did! And you did not ask for it?"

"I did not; and what is more, I shall not accept it."

"Why?"

"Because, in the long run, I can do as well to stay where I am; and, besides, I hope to influence you to make yourself worthy of Mr. Talbot's confidence. Change your habits. Give up the use of tobacco and all stimulating drinks, and do your level best, Loren. Do that, and you can command any position you choose."

"Say I am sorry, and promise to be a good boy all the rest of my life."

"I know you are sorry, Loren, for some things you have done. Now, go to Mr. Talbot and have a plain talk with him. He appreciates your business talents, and would be glad to give you a better position if your habits were different."

"You two seem to have discussed me thoroughly, and decided just how far I can be trusted. I ought to be very much obliged to you for your disinterested kindness."

"Loren, do you think I would say a word to injure you in any way?"

"I don't think or care anything about it; but I presume you told Mr. Talbot I had borrowed money of you."

"I did not. I have never spoken of it to any one, and never shall. I would give you that ten times over, and work extra hours to replace it, if I could only make you realize the danger to which you are exposed."

"I know what you mean," at length responded Loren Parsons a little sadly. "I wish I had begun differently ; but it is hard stopping, and somehow it always falls to my lot to pay the heaviest part of the bills."

"Keep away from places where such bills are likely to be incurred. Cut adrift from unsafe companions and assert yourself. Some have dropped out of your set within a year."

"Yes ; and gone down lower," was replied with a shudder. "There was Currier—a good-hearted, generous fellow as you could find anywhere. He lost his place, and he told me yesterday he hadn't had a square meal for two weeks. I gave him enough to pay for a good dinner, and I hope he enjoyed it. Moody has gone down lower yet ; but you don't believe, Carl, I shall ever reach the point they have?"

"I hope not, Loren ; but I beg of you to take warning by their fate. I know Mr. Talbot is inclined to give you a further trial ; but you must not presume too far. Come to church and Sunday school with me, as you did when we were boys. It may not be very jolly, but it is very pleasant and very safe. Perhaps I shall never talk to you again like this ; but the more I think of what you have at stake, the more imminent seems your danger. What would you do if Mr. Talbot should dismiss you?"

"Don't mention it," cried the young man, springing to his feet. "I believe I should go and hang myself. Thank you for all you have said to me, and I will take care that Mr. Talbot has no reason to complain of me in future. Why, Carl, I am not going to sacrifice everything I hold dear. Think better of me than that, old friend."

CHAPTER V.

THE CHRISTMAS LETTER.

FAR away the Christmas bells were chiming, but they chimed not for Carrie Lincoln. Young and talented, the brightest, sweetest girl in all the country round, she stood looking out upon a dreary waste of snow, thinking how like it was to her life.

The barking of the house-dog roused her from her reverie. There was an arrival, and she was eager to know if the long-expected letter had come.

"Nothing from the post-office, Carrie; but here is a package from Cousin Carl. It was in the box he sent to Uncle George. Every one of them had a present and a letter, and Mary said she guessed you had a book and a letter. Isn't Carl splendid? Fritz Hurlin and I talked about him almost all the way home. Fritz thinks as much of Carl as I do."

"I know they were always good friends," replied the sister.

"Why shouldn't they be? They are a good deal alike in some things. Fritz is going to be somebody. He is going to recite in Greek and Latin to Mr. Ellinwood with Noll Parsons. He told me about it. He has got all his books. I am glad of it. Aren't you, Carrie?"

"Certainly I am; and I hope he will make a splendid scholar."

“He will. There is a good deal more to him than folks give him credit for, if he is homely and awkward. He is just the best to his old grandmother of anybody I ever heard of; and if I was a girl, I should trust him a good deal sooner than I would some dandy fellow who thought more of himself than anybody else.”

A warning glance from Mrs. Lincoln prevented further remarks upon this subject, and Carrie escaped to her chamber, where she opened the package, containing a book and a letter, as had been supposed. A tiny note fell to the floor, marked, “To be read in private,” and this she seized eagerly.

Loren Parsons was unworthy of her regard, and she must learn to forget him. Carl would not have said this without sufficient reason, and, moreover, her own judgment confirmed his words.

It was so kind in her cousin to send her just the book sure to please her, that his thoughtfulness made some amends for another’s neglect, and reminded her that life was still worth living. She was very proud, and now her pride came to her assistance.

She took from her writing-desk some letters, every word of which she could repeat, and laid them upon the coals in the open stove which made her room such a delightful winter retreat; and when they were entirely consumed, she read the bright, newsy letter Carl had written with a feeling of positive pleasure. Then she went below-stairs to join the family gathered in the sitting-room.

“Well, Carrie, what news from Carl?” asked her father. “He seems pretty flush with his presents, but it wouldn’t be strange if he was doing without something he needs, for the sake of making other folks happy. We must all con-

tribute and send him something for New Year's. Read his letter, so we can all hear it, if there isn't any privacy in it. I want to hear from the boy. Sister Mary has had to work hard since her husband lost his health, but she is getting her pay for it."

"Is that all?" asked Burke, when the reading was concluded.

"You can see for yourself," replied Carrie, giving him the letter, which was closely scrutinized to find some allusion to Loren Parsons.

"Mother, I wish you would invite Fritz Hurlin and his grandmother to come here to-morrow," said Burke directly. "They hardly ever go anywhere except to meeting. The turkey is big enough to go 'round."

"If it isn't, there will be enough of something else," rejoined Mr. Lincoln. "Wife, if you and Carrie can manage it, we might make room for them at our table."

"Of course we can manage it," said Carrie.

"Burke can go over and invite them, this evening, and I will get up early to-morrow morning and make Christmas-cakes, such as Mrs. Hurlin used to make when she was a girl."

Two people were very much surprised at being invited to a Christmas dinner; and then, to complete the party, it was decided to invite Aunt Kezie and Noll, so that there was no lack of guests for the day.

"We have had a splendid Christmas, haven't we auntie?" said Noll, after their return home.

"We have had a very pleasant day," was replied. "It made me forget for a little while that I am an old woman."

"Not a bit old, auntie. You don't seem a bit old to

me. But wasn't Grandma Hurlin happy, and don't she think her Fritz is just the best of anybody?"

"He is the best of anybody to her, and Mr. Ellinwood says he has a very superior mind."

"He knows a good many things I never heard anybody else talk about; and, auntie, can't we ask him and his grandmother to come here some day? They wouldn't mind sitting in the kitchen, because they only have a kitchen at home. What a little bit of a house theirs is."

"It is very small, and they have been very poor; but since Fritz has been large enough to work, they live more comfortably."

"And they will be more comfortable all the time. Fritz is a good scholar, besides being a good worker. He told me, to-day, he had been studying Latin all by himself for more than a year, so I shall have to work hard to keep up with him."

"He ought to be in advance of you; he is so much older."

"I know it; he is just a month younger than Carrie Lincoln. When he first came to school, all the scholars made fun of him till Carl Briggs stopped them. He always stood up for Fritz; and I shouldn't wonder if it was Carl that encouraged him to think he could go through college. He said somebody had, and it would be like Carl to do it. He is always trying to help somebody; and, auntie, don't you think that is the way to do?"

"Certainly it is."

"Only, auntie, you shouldn't do too much sometimes when people don't appreciate it, and won't be helped by it."

"I suppose there is a limit; but it is my way to keep on doing and hoping for the best."

Noll was silent for several minutes, and then said in a low tone :

"I don't much believe I shall ever have Carrie Lincoln for my sister, 'though I used to think Loren cared more for her than for anybody else in the world. I wish— But it is no use wishing. Fritz says wishing don't amount to anything. You can sit and wish, with your arms folded, but it takes hard work and heavy blows to build a house or fell a tree."

CHAPTER VI.

THE NEW-YEAR'S PRESENTS.

A HEADACHE sent Loren Parsons to his room at an early hour, while a raging storm made it probable that no one would call upon him ; so he was left to his own devices. Two letters awaited perusal, but he was in no mood for reading them.

The new year had made it necessary that he should take account of himself. More than the usual number of bills awaited payment, in addition to calls for the return of borrowed money. He was learning, to his cost, that jolly times are often purchased at a heavy price.

He threw aside the bills, and opened Noll's letter, in which he was soon interested, forgetting for the time the embarrassments which surrounded him.

"Aunt Kezie and I are going to live in the kitchen all winter, and I am going to work just as hard as I can, so to save some money," wrote the boy. "I am going to study, too, and recite to Mr. Ellinwood. I have begun to plan how I can pay my way through college, but I won't tell you about that yet.

"We had a splendid time, Christmas, at Mr. Lincoln's. Mrs. Hurlin and Fritz were there, and they had a good time too. Fritz is a grand fellow, studying and working like a hero ; and I expect he is going to college. He and his grandmother are better off than they used to be.

“Carrie Lincoln grows handsome every day. She is going to recite in Greek and Latin with Fritz and me, and Mr. Ellinwood says if we don't look sharp she will come out ahead.

“Aunt Kezie is going to write to you, so I will leave the rest of the news for her.”

It would seem that but little remained, since her letter consisted of a single item, having reference only to herself and her nephew. She inclosed a check for a hundred dollars as a New-Year's gift, which she trusted would remind him of her love and her desire for his welfare. Not a word of the economy which had made it possible for her to send this ; not a word of all she had previously done for him.

Loren Parsons, selfish as he was, could not but acknowledge her magnanimity ; yet it must be confessed that he thought more of the relief the money would give him, than of the love which had prompted its bestowal.

Carl Briggs was, perhaps, the last person he would have expected to see ; but it was Carl who came in with hearty greeting—the very impersonation of abounding health and cheerfulness.

“The same old coat !”

“The very same,” replied the visitor to this exclamation, as he threw aside a heavy shawl. “I found it very comfortable as a protection from the storm, supplemented by an outer wrap. But I didn't come out to-night to talk about my old coat. I have received a box from home, containing so many good things, I want to share some of its contents with you, and I have come to invite you to take supper with me in my room at your usual supper hour. We will have coffee, cold chicken, cream-biscuits,

and, as the auctioneers say, other things too numerous to mention."

"Of course I will come, Carl. I should be delighted to share your supper. I hope you don't think I blamed you for having an offer of the place I had counted on for myself."

"There was no reason why you should blame me."

"I never did. It was a great disappointment. I don't mind saying that to you; and so long as I do my work faithfully and honestly, I don't see why Mr. Talbot should trouble himself about what I do out of business hours. I am as honest with him as you could be. I have never taken a cent from him which was not my due, and I have never neglected his interests where I was responsible."

"I believe you, Loren, and I presume Mr. Talbot has no doubt of your honesty; but he looks with suspicion upon young men who spend money more freely than their salaries warrant, and who are known to be somewhat lax in their temperance principles."

"Mr. Talbot drinks wine. Why is it worse for me than for him?"

"You must answer that question for yourself. You know all about it as well as I can tell you. For my part, I prefer a strictly total abstinence man for my employer."

"Did you say that to Mr. Talbot?"

"I did not."

"I wish you had. He might have seen that there are two sides to the question, and two parties to be considered. Why, Carl, I have had wine offered me in his house; and I presume if he should give a supper to his clerks, this winter, as he has before, there would be wine upon the table. I hope you don't think me a drunkard, Carl? I

never drink much—only a little to keep others company and help along a jolly time. I don't see any harm in it. I should feel as though I was tied to somebody's apron-strings if I had promised never to drink anything stronger than tea or coffee."

"Being tied to apron-strings is not a bad thing for a young man when a good woman wears the apron. For my part I am tied to several, and consider myself all the better for it."

"What do you mean, Carl? I never heard that you had a single flirtation in all your life. I thought you were altogether above and beyond that."

"I am not talking of flirtations; but there are my sisters and cousins, and, best of all, my mother, to whom I am bound by cords stronger than any apron-strings I ever heard of. I would not do anything to grieve or make them lose their confidence in me for the world. When my mother looks into my eyes, I want to be able to look back clear and steady."

"That sounds just like you, Carl. But would you promise anything they asked of you?"

"I should be very likely to, if it was in my power to keep the promise. If I can ever attain to my mother's ideal of what a man's life should be, I shall reach the utmost bound of my ambition. But I must go. The storm is increasing, and I have no wish to encounter anything more severe than I faced on my way here. Here is a package for you which came in my box. I shall expect you to-morrow without fail. Good-evening."

As Loren Parsons glanced at the superscription of the package, he tore it open with nervous haste, to find carefully inclosed the plain gold ring he had given to Carrie

Lincoln before leaving his country home. She was little more than a child then, but she had trusted him ; promising to wear the ring for his sake until he should replace it with one more costly and elegant.

His face flushed as he recalled the past, yet he experienced a sense of relief from what might sometime prove an irksome restraint. There was no one now to whom he considered himself in any way accountable. He could tide over the present, and the future must take care of itself. He would not look on the dark side.

He must, however, make some acknowledgment of his aunt's generosity ; and for once he did this in such a manner as flattered her with the assurance that her kindness was appreciated.

CHAPTER VII.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

CARL BRIGGS had just taken his seat in the cars, when Loren Parsons came in, and, stopping to speak with him, said :

“Where now? I thought you never went out of the city except for a walk.”

“This is an exception to the rule,” was replied. “I am going home for a two weeks’ vacation. Are you booked for the same place?”

“Not I. I have made a new business arrangement which takes me in quite another direction, and will keep me more closely confined than ever before. I don’t know when I can go home ; certainly not at present.”

“It is two years since you have seen your brother.”

“Yes ; and it may be two years longer before I shall see him again. I suppose he has grown quite out of my knowledge ; so, two years, more or less, will make no difference. You will see him and Aunt Keziah?”

“I intend to see as many of my friends as possible, and I count them among my friends.”

“Well, give my regards to them, and to everybody else who inquires for me. If I accepted the situation offered me, I must do it at once, so I had no time for visiting. Now I must go forward into another car ; so good-bye and good luck to you.”

"Good-bye," responded Carl Briggs, shaking heartily the hand extended to him, and thinking, as he did so, of the change a few months had wrought in one upon whom so many hopes had been centered.

His thoughts, however, were otherwise engrossed as he drew near home, and when there he forgot everything but his immediate family, who were overjoyed to see him—his mother claiming his first attention, and looking into his clear, blue eyes with the unspoken question he could so well interpret.

"Yes, mother, I have kept my promise," he answered.

"And my boy has come back to me?" she responded.

"Yes, mother."

"Thank God for that. You have been put to the test and come off conqueror."

"Through Christ, who has saved me," added the son softly.

"Now let us have supper," said the happy woman, soon after, as she seated herself at the table. "I want you to try some of my cream biscuits and see how you like them. We will wait for further questions until by and by."

"Then let us try the biscuits as soon as possible," rejoined Mr. Briggs. "Uncle Amos and his wife will be here before long, and then there will be no chance for eating. They will have plenty of questions to ask."

"And I a plenty more," responded Carl. "I must improve every minute. It will take me some time to make the acquaintance of my young lady sisters whom I left as little girls."

"You didn't expect us to stand still while you monopolized all the growing, did you?" asked one of his sisters.

"I didn't expect; but I have always thought of you as

you were the last time I saw you. Father is looking in better health."

"And you, my son, are looking in as good health as when you went away. You are a true country boy after all."

This was the general verdict. His uncle said :

"You have come back all right. I don't know how much money you have saved, and I don't care ; but I know you have saved your own self-respect, and that is a fortune to any young man."

The name of Loren Parsons was not mentioned that evening ; but the next day, when Carl Briggs was on his way to his uncle's, Noll met him by the brook, where the shade was dark and dense.

"I am ever and ever so glad to see you," cried the boy, throwing his arms around his friend and bursting into tears. "I have been watching for you since early this morning. I thought you would go this way to Mr. Lincoln's, and I wanted to see you as soon as I could, so to have the worst over."

"Why, Ollie, I hope you didn't expect anything bad of me," replied Carl, gently, his own eyes dim with gathering moisture.

"Not bad of you ; but come and sit down on this flat stone, where we can talk after I get done crying. There, now, it is all over," he said, when the sympathy of his companion had soothed and comforted him. "I want to know about my brother, and you needn't be afraid to tell me the very worst. He smokes, doesn't he ?"

"Yes ; but so do most young men, and old men too."

"He plays cards for winning, doesn't he ?"

"I think he does play cards, but that is a common practice among men, and women too."

"He drinks beer and whisky and wine and champagne, doesn't he?"

"Possibly he does."

"But don't you know he does?"

"I think he does."

"So do I; and I have been pretty sure of it for a long time. At first, it seemed as though it couldn't be; but I have read a good deal lately about the habits of young men, and I think he belongs to the fast set. He never wanted to sit down and have a cosy time with Aunt Kezie and me; and after he went away, he didn't write to us as he ought to. Do you know the name of the place where he has gone?"

"No; he didn't tell me."

"Did he come to see you very often? I know I am asking lots of questions, but I want to know all I can about him, and you might not think to tell me if I didn't."

"Loren has not been to my room since last winter, when I invited him to supper."

"Was that when they all sent you such a big box of goodies and that nice traveling shawl?"

"Yes, it was."

"Does Loren owe you any money?"

"Not a cent. Why did you ask me that?"

"Because he was always borrowing money of me when I had any, and he hardly ever paid me. I think Aunt Kezie sent him some money, last winter, but I don't know certain, and I thought perhaps he kept away from you because he was in debt to you."

"That was not the reason at all, Ollie. He likes a jolly time, and my jolly times are different from his."

"Of course they are, and so are mine. If Loren goes

on as he has begun, he will be a drunkard, and one of the worst kind too."

"That is looking on the very darkest side."

"I know it; but it is the true side for him unless he reforms. I feel so sorry for Aunt Kezie every time I think how much she has done for him, and he has never done anything for her. She paid all his bills when he was away to school, and the bills were larger than they ought to be too."

"Yet Loren never was guilty of any great misconduct when at school. He only wanted fun, as a good many others do. Don't think of him as exceptionally bad, Ollie."

"I don't. I know there are a good many others as bad as he is. I never told anybody, Carl, not even Aunt Kezie; but I wrote Loren a very long letter about three months ago, and I wrote so I was pretty sure of an answer. I wrote about his being all the brother I have, and how much I loved him, and how I was willing to do anything I could to help him. Then I wrote about his drinking and playing cards, and begged of him to give it up. I told him, too, that I prayed for him every day, and—"

Here the boy fairly broke down, but at last, with a great effort, he controlled himself, and said:

"All the answer Loren sent was to-tell me to mind my own business, and not bother him with any more sermons. That hurt me dreadfully," continued Noll. "I cried, and cried, and cried, but I didn't let Aunt Kezie know it. Somebody was sick, so she wasn't at home much for a week, and I managed to keep it all to myself. Don't you think it was bad for my brother to treat me so?"

"Indeed I do, Ollie, and I am very sorry; but there is no way for you only, to bear it as bravely as you can."

“Yes, Carl, I made up my mind to that ; and I don’t think Loren can ever make me feel so bad again, no matter what he does. There is somebody coming, and I must hurry back to my work, but I want to see you a good deal longer before you go away again. I am trying to make up my mind just what to do, and I shall feel ever so much better if I can tell you all about it.”

CHAPTER VIII.

NO MORE PREACHING.

"I AM not going to ask you how my nephew spends his money, or who are his chosen companions ; but I wish to know if, in my future arrangements, I ought to consider him," said Miss Keziah Parsons, when opportunity offered for her to speak confidentially with Carl Briggs. "I have seen too many others like him not to understand his weak points. I always feared for him, yet I determined to give him a fair start in the world."

"You have done your full duty by him," was replied. "Every one capable of judging must acknowledge that Loren is now quite able to provide for himself, and if anything will bring him to realize the responsibility of living, it will be some stern experience when he must rely entirely upon his own resources."

"Then I must give him up and make no further attempts to reach him until he comes to me of his own accord. Is that what you would advise ? You see, Carl, I presume upon your knowledge of his habits."

"I think it would do no good to attempt to reach him at present," responded Carlton Briggs after some delay.

"Thank you. . I understand ; and I am glad to know the worst. When I can look a calamity fairly in the face, I know I can bear it."

"You have Noll, Miss Keziah."

"Thank God, I have; and no one else knows what a dear, unselfish boy he is. I am learning to depend upon him in every way. Your cousin, Carrie Lincoln, says he has remarkable talents."

"I think he has, and I hope he will be able to improve them."

"He shall have his chance. I am not past work yet; and, if necessary, the old farm can carry another mortgage. It is hard for me to have Loren what he is, but I am more sorry for Ollie than for myself."

Noll Parsons assured Carlton Briggs that he was more sorry for his aunt than for himself; so there was no lack of mutual sympathy in a common sorrow.

"I am not going to worry myself any more about Loren," said the resolute boy. "I have thought it all over hundreds of times, trying to find a way out; and now, if you are willing to hear it, I should like to tell you what I have made up my mind to."

"I should be very glad to hear it," replied his friend, gazing admiringly upon the face which seemed to have gained an expression of strength quite new to it.

"Well, I am not going to write to Loren again unless he writes to me. I shall never preach to him any more either; but I shall pray for him every day, and I think sometime he will be glad to have me help him. You never know what anybody will do who has begun as he has. I am going to do the very best I can for Aunt Kezie and myself; and I tell you, Carl, I shall have a good education. I would do anything for Loren that would make him better; but if he is determined to go wrong, it won't make things any easier, for me to waste my life watching him and crying over him. At first, I thought

I couldn't study or work until he was different ; but I prayed myself out of that feeling."

There was the look of strength again. The boy was giving way to the man ; and as time went on, Oliver Parsons grew constantly more cheerful and self-reliant, evincing maturity of judgment, and fast relieving his aunt of out-of-door cares.

To Fritz Hurlin he confided his personal hopes and ambitions, yet spoke never a word in regard to his brother. With Carrie Lincoln he was on such friendly terms that people sometimes said he had usurped his brother's place in her regard ; yet the name of the absent one was never mentioned between them.

Occasionally a letter came to the old farmhouse, written "in haste," containing but few lines, and by no means satisfactory, yet welcomed as proof that the recipients were not entirely forgotten.

So five years passed, when Carlton Briggs and Loren Parsons, who had parted on board a railroad train, met in a strange city where both were transacting business.

"What do you hear from Noll?" asked the former, after some desultory conversation.

"Nothing particular, only that he is well and prosperous," was replied. "I write to him occasionally, to let him know that I am alive, and he always answers me promptly ; but, as he grows older, his letters grow shorter. Have you seen him lately?"

"I saw him a few months ago."

"What is he doing ; running Aunt Keziah's farm?"

"That is one thing he is doing ; but hasn't he told you?"

"No ; he never says much about himself."

"He is in college."

"He is in college! Who pays his bills?"

"He pays most of them himself, and your Aunt Keziah makes up the deficiency. She can afford to, too. He manages the farm to great advantage."

"Noll in college!" said Loren Parsons musingly. "It does not seem possible. How does he look? Is he a fine scholar?"

"Very fine, and he is very fine-looking. His friends are proud of him."

"Well, I suppose I ought to be ashamed of not knowing any more about him; but the truth is, we have drifted a good ways apart; and, besides, he and Aunt Keziah always seemed sufficient to each other. I think, every year, that another year, perhaps, I will make them a visit; but when the time comes 'round, there is something else to take up my time and attention. In business for yourself, Carl?"

"In partnership."

"At the old stand?"

"Yes; I have never changed my quarters."

"You are in luck, as usual. I believe in luck."

"I believe in Providence, and in reaping what you sow."

"That sounds as natural as the tone of your voice, Carl. Well, I am glad to have seen you, and glad to have heard from Noll. I wonder he hadn't told me he was in college. He must be twenty years old, 'though it don't seem possible. I must send him a few dollars once in a while. I ought to be able to do that on my present salary; yet I have found that the more one has, the more one must spend. Are you married, Carl?"

"Not yet."

"Engaged?"

"I am happy to say that I am."

"Well, I congratulate you, and would drink your health in a glass of wine if you would drink with me. I suppose you stick to your old pledge?"

"I do."

"So do I to mine, and that is to get the most I can out of life. I am neither married nor engaged to be married; but I manage to have a jolly time as I go along. You know I always looked on the bright side, and I am determined to keep looking ~~there~~ *there*."

CHAPTER IX.

HANDSOME DRESSES.

GRANDMA HURLIN and Aunt Keziah protested against the extravagance, and yet Mrs. Carlton Briggs was commissioned to purchase two dress patterns of elegant black silk, with suitable trimmings. In addition to this, she was also requested to superintend the making of these dresses, that they might be both becoming and fashionable.

As a result, the two ladies surveyed themselves and each other with wondering satisfaction.

"Why, Mrs. Hurlin, you must have been a handsome girl," said Miss Parsons. .

"So must you, and you are not so old that you have lost your beauty yet," was responded. "You ought to have worn handsome dresses all your life. Why, my dear, I should hardly recognize you as the same woman I have seen at work in your kitchen and superintending your farm."

"If I had worn handsome dresses all my life, I should have no farm to superintend. I like to look as well as I can for Ollie's sake; otherwise it would make but little difference, although I always intend to have everything tidy."

"You do have everything tidy, and Ollie is the tidiest farmer in town. Fritz says he finds poetry in farming, and enjoys it. Nothing seems like drudgery to him."

"Nothing ever did seem so to him."

"Miss Keziah, he is a remarkable young man. Fritz says he is a great favorite in college, and everybody is glad that he has the valedictory. I am thankful they could go together. He has been a help to Fritz. I know the difference between the boys, Miss Keziah, although I am satisfied with mine."

"Well you may be, Mrs. Hurlin, and every one else who knows him is satisfied with him too. He is a genius."

"He says he has a genius for hard work; and when he comes home, he is just as ready to do for me as he used to be when he came home from school, grieved because the scholars ridiculed him. We were poor then. Many a time I went hungry myself that Fritz might have more; but he has paid me for it a hundred times over. There never was a time, 'though, Miss Keziah, when I hadn't money in the house. I began saving, as soon as Fritz and I were left alone in the world, to pay for his schooling. There have always been scholars in our family, and so I thought Fritz might be one. I planned for it from the first."

"You hoped he would be a scholar?"

"I hoped, and then I didn't, dear. There have been some going wrong in our family, and the best scholars have gone the farthest wrong. There was always beer and wine, and sometimes worse, with wild words and often wild deeds that brought sorrow. Ah! Miss Keziah, I know what drink does, and so does my Fritz, for I have told him. Since he could understand my words, I have taught him to hate it, and when he first left me for school I told him the story of our family. I told him, too, I would rather see him dead than to see him like his father. That was a hard thing to do, Miss Keziah."

"It must have been; and I almost wonder you could bring yourself to say it."

"Right is right, and the boys must not go to ruin if we can keep them back. No one warned me of danger, but I have warned my Fritz."

"You were not always so poor, Mrs. Hurlin?"

"No more than many another. When one chooses a home, one must bide the chosen fate. I have had blessings all the way in friends God has given me, and now my Fritz makes up for all I have lacked before. Why, dear, when he is at home he makes everything beautiful around me, and tells me how to make the best of it all, the same as if he was a girl, although he is so strong he can lift me like a baby. The woman who gets my Fritz for a husband will have no trouble he can keep from her."

"Ollie says there is but one woman in the world for him."

"I know about it, Miss Keziah, and so does Fritz, but he can bide his time. Not that he ever told me in words aught of it. It is not like him to tell another before he tells the one who should hear first from him. He has his way and his name to make in the world, so there is no haste."

"But if another wins the woman he would choose?"

"Then by that token will he know she was not for him."

"I hope there will be no such token, Mrs. Hurlin. You will have Fritz at home again for a few months."

"Yes, Miss Keziah, and thankful I am for it, 'though he will be by himself, studying and writing many hours each day. He says he shall have time then to finish the house and help Ollie about farming. But we started with our

dresses, and have come out the same we always do. Our hearts always lead us back to our boys. I never know when to stop when talking of my Fritz. I hope Carlton Briggs will be here next week. It was he who gave Fritz the first start toward college, and he ought to be one to see the end of it."

"The end of it is not yet, Mrs. Hurlin ; but Carl's wife says he will be sure to come next week."

"She is sure to know, and he never disappoints her. If there was ever a perfect marriage in the world it is that of Carl Briggs and his wife. It seems almost strange, too, that such a rich, beautiful girl, who could choose from so many, should have chosen him ; yet when she comes here she is like one brought up among us."

"I never could make her seem like a stranger."

"No more could I, Miss Keziah ; and why should I ? When she comes to my house she brings a glint of sunshine with her ; and when she sits down beside me, I half think it is my own daughter, dead long ago. She is a happy woman, and her husband is a happy man ; and, do you know, Miss Keziah, she says she would never have married him if she had not known he was a strict teetotaler."

CHAPTER X.

A STEP LOWER.

LOREN PARSONS read the letter to the end, then, glancing around the apartment, smiled bitterly. His brother was to graduate from college with the highest honors, and he was invited to be present.

"I wish to have all my dearest friends with me then, and long as it is since I have seen you, we are still brothers," wrote the valedictorian. "Fritz Hurlin and I are expecting quite a delegation of our towns-people, and I hope you will be of the number.

"I send you my photograph, thinking you may value it, and if I do not see you, as I hope, please send me yours. I wish to know how my only brother looks."

Fine-looking, indeed. Carlton Briggs had spoken truly, as Loren Parsons could not but acknowledge. The face was pure, strong, and self-reliant—not a trace of evil passion or evil habit.

"Aunt Keziah's own boy," muttered the man who held the photograph in his hand. "Wonder how I should feel at Commencement with such a strait-laced set! No, my precious brother, you won't see me or my photograph. One beauty in a family of two boys is enough, and you are welcome to the beauty."

He threw letter and photograph into the drawer of a rough table, and taking his pipe, began to smoke, that he

might thus drive away the blues. He needed to think seriously, but serious thinking was utterly distasteful to him. He was still determined to look on the bright side, although it would be difficult for any one but himself to see a bright side to his life.

He had lost the position which gave him a salary even he confessed to be generous, and the reason for this loss would count against him in the future, as it had in the past, unless he should reform his habits. He had been the traveling agent of a large liquor establishment, until his intemperance became too notorious to be longer tolerated.

His employers made no other complaint of him. They did not doubt his honesty. They certainly could not doubt his fidelity to their interests. He had greatly advanced their prosperity, and they were sorry to part with him, yet felt constrained to dismiss him from their service. They treated him generously, giving him a quarter's salary, and expressing the hope that he would learn to drink more moderately.

He left the city at once, and going where he hoped to meet no one he had ever seen before, hired a room in a cheap lodging-house, taking his meals wherever it suited his convenience. He calculated carefully how long and how far he could indulge in cheap dissipation without becoming absolutely penniless.

He was less fastidious than he had been when younger. If dime cigars were beyond his means, he could solace himself with a clay pipe and fine-cut; if he could not afford to drink wine, he could be satisfied with whisky.

He recognized the fact that he was fast sinking in the social scale, and he knew also that his few family friends

must be aware of this, although he had kept quite aloof from them. He cursed himself for his folly in writing to his brother, so making it possible to communicate with him.

"I must stop this thinking," he exclaimed under his breath, with a fearful oath; and going to a dingy cupboard took from it a flask of liquor, which, however, he quickly replaced that he might answer a summons to the door. Here he met a man, evidently several years his senior, and by no means his superior in manners.

"I called to see if you had decided to accept my offer," said the visitor. "I want to know what to depend upon. I have made you a good offer."

"And I suppose I shall accept it," replied Loren Parsons.

"All right. Will you be ready for business in the morning?"

"Yes; I can be ready then as well as any time."

"I will close the bargain to-day, and we will meet in the morning."

"To drink to our success, Yeaton?"

"Not so fast. Work first and drink afterwards. It won't do to be too good customers at our own bar. We must keep a respectable place or the authorities will be down on us. We are going in for making money, and there is no reason why we shouldn't do it. Liquor selling is the best paying business in the country. Everybody knows that; and as long as Government is glad to get the revenue, there's no need of being squeamish about it. We may as well take the profits ourselves, as look on and see others take them. I am just going to burn my ships, and march on to fortune, if not to fame."

"Fortune brings fame ; so, if one has enough of the former, the latter is sure to come."

"Then we will try for both. You and I know the ropes, Parsons. We are good judges of liquors, and can furnish a variety at short notice. Meet me in the morning, and be sure you come sober. We must make a good show in starting, and a half tipsy man will spoil the best business that was ever thought of."

"Yes, I know it," was replied mechanically, while the speaker seemed hardly conscious of the words thus uttered.

As soon as Loren Parsons was alone, he took Noll's letter and photograph from the drawer and placed them before him. He read again the letter, and studied long the fair, open face, with eyes which looked straight into his own.

"Noll, Noll !" he cried, in a smothered tone. "Oh, if I had only kept close to you, I should not be what I am now ! My God, have I come to this ! A partner in a retail liquor saloon, doing the drudgery for a paltry share of the profits ! Go to Commencement with Carl Briggs and his rich wife ! They are nothing to me ; Noll is nothing to me. I went in for a jolly time, and a jolly time it shall be to the end."

He sprang to his feet, seized the whisky-flask, drained it of its contents, and then threw himself upon the bed, where he was sure soon to forget all trouble in a drunken sleep.

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNDERTONE OF SADNESS.

THE graduating exercises were all which had been anticipated—Oliver Parsons and Fritz Hurlin receiving the warmest congratulations of their friends.

Grandma Hurlin was present—universally pronounced the most delightful old lady at Commencement; Aunt Keziah, too, received her full share of attention, although she thought only of her boy, who was to her the impersonation of all nobility and truth.

Mr. and Mrs. Carlton Briggs, with Miss Carrie Lincoln, who accompanied them, made quite a distinguished party, giving honor to whom honor was due, and adding much to the general happiness.

The two who had stood side by side in their college course without thought of envy or rivalry, shared the confidence of all with whom they had been associated; carrying with them from their *alma mater* the best wishes of students and faculty.

If one seemed at times to outstrip the other, it had been little more than seeming, except in elocutionary power. There, Oliver Parsons bore off the palm from all competitors.

Strong in argument, clear in logic, and with a voice modulated to every emotion of which the human heart is capable, he held his audience at his will. An undertone

of sadness, so often remarked, gave an added pathos to his words, and revealed to those who knew him best the sorrow and anxiety so carefully hidden from the world.

“Carl, I must talk with you again about Loren,” he said, one afternoon when they were all at home, and the two were enjoying a stroll together. “I am afraid you will grow tired of the subject; but I never speak of him to any one else, except when I receive a letter from him, and then neither Aunt Kezie nor I care to say much. No one but myself knows it; but the feeling that I shall sometime need to use my utmost endeavors for Loren has been a powerful incentive to me to do my best in everything I have undertaken. I have learned much of the world in the last four years, and my brother is no exception to the general experience of young men who cut adrift from home influence. I believe I am prepared for anything which may transpire.”

“I would not allow myself to anticipate evil of my brother. There are thousands of men who live on, their own worst enemies for many years, and yet who never go beyond a certain point in their recklessness.”

“I know there are; and there are thousands of others who finish their career with some terrible crime which consigns them to punishment and infamy. This is what I fear for Loren. I do not know that my last letter reached him; but if so, he did not choose to answer it. If you hear anything of him, Carl, I wish you would inform me.”

“I will, Noll, if the information will benefit either you or him.”

“And if he ever applies to you for money, will you let him have it, charging the same to me, and trusting me to repay it?”

"I will let him have money if he asks for it, and if you are ever richer than I you can repay it."

"That humiliates me, Carl. I do not expect ever to be richer than you, but I hope sometime to earn a competency. I shall commence the study of law in a few weeks."

"And I have no doubt you will become an able and brilliant lawyer. It shall be as you wish in regard to money. If Loren applies to me, I will render you an exact account of the matter, but you must not injure yourself for him."

"Why, Carl, I am willing to deny myself everything, except what is absolutely necessary for my health and the prosecution of my studies, that I may be able to help Loren. I can not live like a hermit or a beggar, because that would defeat my purpose. I must maintain a respectable position in the world."

"You must do the best you can for yourself, Noll. That is your first duty. At present, I see no way in which you can materially assist your brother."

"Neither do I. As Aunt Kezie says, he must go to the length of his chain. When he reaches the end, then will be my time. I used to think of him so much, imagining every kind of evil, that he haunted me like some frightful apparition from which I prayed to be delivered."

"And was your prayer granted?"

"At last it was. I am as solicitous as ever for his good, but I can think of him calmly. If he is kept from crime I shall be very thankful, yet that is more than I expect."

"It is better not to expect evil."

"But I must be prepared for it. To be forewarned is to be forearmed."

"Has Loren ever sent you any assistance in the way of money?"

"Not a penny. If he had, I should not have spent it on myself. It would have belonged to Aunt Kezie."

"Have you managed to go through your college course without incurring any debt?"

"I have. I have been obliged to work hard and calculate closely to do it; but you know I have no extravagant habits any more than Fritz Hurlin. We had no tobacco or liquor bills, and we were satisfied with plain, substantial board; but we paid our full share of all necessary class and society expenses. At first we encountered some ridicule, because we determined to be on the side of law, order, and economy; but as the shafts fell harmlessly, we were soon left to pursue our own course unmolested. Where principle is concerned, Fritz is as immovable as the everlasting hills, and I trust I am not easily tempted."

"Fritz has developed wonderfully."

"More than you know too. He would make his mark in the world as a scientific man; yet we hope some day to have a law office together. He says I can supply his deficiencies, and I am very sure that whatever I may lack he can more than supply. People are beginning to appreciate him and his grandmother too. Didn't she look like some grand old duchess, dressed so elegantly, with soft, delicate lace about her neck and falling over her shapely hands?"

"She did, indeed; and Gertie thinks she has noble blood in her veins. She never talks much of herself, but she told Gertie that the lace so much admired had belonged to her great-grandmother."

"Wouldn't it be strange if there should be a fortune waiting somewhere for Fritz? I mean a fortune not of his own making. I am sure he will make a fortune for himself."

"Why so sure?"

"Because he is largely gifted with what people call foresight. Then he seems to know by intuition if any venture is likely to succeed; and if he wishes to accomplish a certain purpose, he knows just where and how to work for its accomplishment. Oh! if my brother was only like him, I would be content to live in the humblest plainest manner all my life."

CHAPTER XII.

A HARD DRINKER.

CARL BRIGGS had not been long back from his summer vacation when he received a letter from Loren Parsons asking for the loan of a few hundred dollars, and promising to return it at an early day.

He said that he was engaged in a lucrative business, but having no capital, he had been obliged to make such terms as placed him at the mercy of his partner, who was disposed to take advantage of his poverty. The loan he desired would change all this and give him an opportunity to retrieve his fortune. Not satisfied to make a plain, straightforward statement of his case, he humiliated himself by an almost abject appeal to his old friend's generosity.

But for the promise to Noll, Carlton Briggs would have refused the loan ; now he had no alternative. Moreover, if it was not repaid, it would probably save him from all further annoyance in that direction.

He forwarded a check for the amount required, and in due time received an acknowledgment of the same, with a promissory note which had not the least commercial value.

He heard nothing more from Loren Parsons until two years afterwards, when a mutual acquaintance enlightened him.

"I stumbled upon Parsons one day in the most accidental manner," said this acquaintance. "He was standing in the door of a fourth-rate liquor saloon, and I looked at him twice before I was sure of him. I called him by name, and he responded, although it was plain to be seen that he wished me somewhere else. He has changed wonderfully. He used to be a good-looking fellow, but now he looks coarse and beery. He is very stout, with fat, puffy hands and watery eyes."

"That tells the story of his habits."

"As plain as plain can be. I have not seen him before, since he left Talbot's."

"I have seen him but once. He was travelling for Dorson, an extensive liquor dealer. I did not know what his business was then, but he told me he had a large salary."

"Dorson could afford it. I heard a man say, not long ago, that he had amassed a fortune. Parsons understood business, and I wondered Talbot did not keep him. I knew he was a little fast, but Talbot is not a teetotaler."

"That is true; but men like him tolerate in themselves what they condemn in others. A teetotaler is reasonably sure to have a clear head, while a liquor drinker is not always to be trusted."

"True, Briggs; and the worst of it is that a man who drinks liquor is continually changing base. He can not remain stationary; he must advance or retreat. I retreated and saved myself. I had a good many jollifications with Loren Parsons and his set; but I couldn't afford to sacrifice my chances in life for the sake of a few champagne suppers, supplemented by crazy headaches and a depleted

pocket-book. So I swore off from drinking and smoking, and have been better and happier for it ever since."

"I never swore off, for I never began. I don't know the taste of liquor; and as for tobacco, I always detested it. But tell me more of Parsons. What is he doing?"

"Running a liquor saloon. He was on his own premises when I saw him. He was not inclined to say much about himself, but I judged there was a gambling-room connected with the saloon. He was well dressed, 'though in rather a flashy style; said he had nothing to complain of, and looked on the bright side. He asked me to drink a glass of wine with him, which, of course, I declined to do. He asked some questions about old friends, but he was not inclined to converse very freely. He referred to you as one who always had good luck, and said he was glad you had prospered so well."

"Has he a partner?"

"He said he was alone; got tired of partnership and bought out the whole concern. I wanted to preach him a sharp sermon on temperance, but I refrained."

"Preaching would have no effect upon him. He must be a hard drinker."

"He is; and I can not help thinking that, when I was with him, he felt his degradation keenly. He used to be as proud and fastidious as any one of us, but he has gone a great ways beyond that. I asked him if he was married, and he told me he was not; said he preferred his freedom, with a bachelor's jolly life. Sometime, when he felt the infirmities of age coming upon him, he might marry and settle down, provided some rich woman was ready to furnish him with needed funds. He said this in a reckless

mocking tone, as if he looked upon life as a farce and responsibility as a curse."

"Yet, when he was young, he was quite a favorite with the girls."

"That may be, Briggs ; but if any girl who admired him when he was younger should see him now, her admiration would be changed to disgust. He was to me almost revolting ; and if he keeps on in his present course, he will soon be unfit for the business in which he is now engaged, low as it is. He said he was making money."

"And, of course, he is spending it."

"Exactly. He never was one to deny himself any gratification within his means. He invited me to dine with him, but I declined. When I left him, he asked me to call again, but I have no wish to see more of him."

"I am glad to hear that things are no worse with him," said Carlton Briggs. "His friends are my friends, so that I shall never lose my interest in him whatever he may do."

"If he lives, he will need all that his friends can do for him ; and if he dies, may God have mercy on his soul."

CHAPTER XIII.

DYING FOR WHISKY.

“FOR God’s sake, give me a drink of whisky! I haven’t a cent to my name, and I haven’t had a square meal for a month; but I’m dying for a drink of whisky. Give it to me, and set me to any job you’re a mind to. I’ll do anything for whisky.”

Thus did a ragged, filthy tramp address the keeper of a low saloon, his cringing manners and tremulous voice betraying his abject wretchedness.

“Who are you? What is your name?” was asked in reply; and when no answer was received, these questions were followed by another: “Is your name Currier?”

“Yes, and yours is—is—Parsons. I wasn’t looking for my old friend, Parsons; but we never know who we are going to meet. You’ll give me a glass of whisky, won’t you?” and the wretched man, thus begging for whisky, drew a tattered sleeve across his bleared eyes.

“Come with me,” said the saloon-keeper, leading the way into the inner room, where, turning abruptly, and looking at his companion, he asked:

“Is your name John Currier?”

“It used to be, but I haven’t heard it for so long, I had almost forgotten it,” responded the tramp after some hesitation. “But for God’s sake give me some whisky. I’m dying for whisky.”

"More likely you are dying from having had too much of it; but stay here, and I will bring you some."

The whisky was of the vilest, yet the beggar was grateful.

"It isn't like the champagne at Carney's and Wilder's; but that would be baby's drink for me now," he said with a sigh, which might be either of satisfaction or regret.

It was John Currier. Loren Parsons was now sure of it beyond a doubt.

"The world has gone hard with you," he remarked with something like pity in his voice.

"You may say that, Parsons, and not tell half the truth. I've been through almost everything, until now I don't care what happens to me, if I can only get enough of some kind of liquor to drink. My God, what a thirst it is! I've been near starved, but starving don't count beside it. Couldn't you, for old time's sake, let me have another glass, and then get your pay out of me some way? I am shaky now, but whisky will put life into me, so I can work."

"I will give you a good supper, with hot coffee. Why, man, you are half starved, and need supper more than you need whisky."

"I'm used to starving, and I'd rather have whisky than supper any time. Maybe you'll want it yourself some time when you won't have anything to pay for it, 'though I hope you'll never come to that. It's the worst of anything. I know, for I've been through it all."

Loren Parsons was, for the moment, tempted to turn his back upon the wretch who thus confronted him with his possible future. He had never begged for whisky, but he knew enough of poverty to realize its bitterness. He

knew, also, only too well, the torture of an intense longing for alcoholic drink.

"Take a bath, Currier, and have on a decent suit of clothes," he said at length. "I can give you a better suit than you are wearing now."

"God bless you for that, Parsons. You are the first friend I have seen for years. I used to dress well and live well; but I won't think of those days. It will drive me mad if I do. Can't you give me some kind of a chance, so I can stay with you? I won't be particular what it is, if I can only have a shelter over my head, and—regular rations of whisky. I can't live without whisky. I'd serve you faithfully, Parsons."

"I will keep you for the present," responded Loren Parsons. "Go in there," he added, pointing to a room little larger than a closet, but which contained conveniences for bathing and dressing. "I will bring you a suit of clothes, and I want you to make yourself as presentable as possible. I will have supper ready for you when you come out, and after that you can rest. You must be tired."

"Tired!" repeated John Currier. "I've been so long on a tramp, I don't know as I am ever tired. I'll do as you told me, if you'll lend me a razor."

"You'll find one in the room," replied the saloon-keeper, and hastened to bring a suit of clothes, which he had long before outgrown, and which he rightly judged would fit his old companion.

Then he ordered supper from a neighboring restaurant giving orders that the coffee should be very strong, with plenty of sugar and milk. He spread the table himself, really making an effort to have it attractive to his guest.

For some reason his heart warmed to this man, who had gone down even lower than himself. It was so long, too, since any one had asked a real favor of him, that it gratified his pride to bestow a gift in charity. Another feeling, also, had its influence. He knew there might come a time when he should need a friend upon whose faithfulness he could rely in any emergency. Currier could be made useful, remaining constantly on the premises and ready for any service.

This was the bright side ; but that there was a dark side could not be denied. A man who had tramped for years could hardly be expected to have a record for honesty ; and, moreover, it was impossible to calculate to what desperation his appetite might drive him.

"Parsons, how are you ?" exclaimed the person under consideration, coming into the presence of his benefactor. "I declare, I hardly knew myself when I looked in the glass. I couldn't get rid of the old, grizzly hair ; but if it wasn't for that, I should almost think I was young again. Dress does a good deal for a man ; there's no denying that."

"It has improved you wonderfully, Currier. Now sit down to your supper and enjoy it."

The guest waited for no second bidding. He ate voraciously, like one long unused to a plentiful supply of food ; drinking cup after cup of coffee, until at last he said huskily :

"May God bless you for your kindness to an outcast. Now what can I do for you ?"

"Nothing to-night. I am going to give you a place to sleep, and in the morning we will see what we can do."

“I could sleep better if I had a glass of whisky before I go to bed. You’d miss it yourself, wouldn’t you, if you didn’t have it?”

No reply was made to this question, but the whisky was brought, and presently John Currier was sleeping soundly in a rough, dirty apartment in one corner of a shed.

CHAPTER XIV.

MURDER.

THE telegram received by Oliver Parsons from Carlton Briggs consisted only of three words : "Come at once." Yet he understood its full import.

"I must leave on the next train," he said to his partner, Fritz Hurlin, who was sitting on the opposite side of the table from him, writing busily.

"Shall you be gone long?" was asked in reply.

"I can not tell. Loren is in trouble somewhere. I don't know where or how ; but Briggs knows, and I must see him as soon as possible. I am sorry to leave you with so much work on your hands, but I must go."

"What do you expect?"

"Anything. Pray for me, Fritz, and, if need be, come to me."

"Count on me to the end, Noll, and draw on the funds of the firm as long as there is a dollar left."

There were short consultations upon important matters, and hurried arrangements of business ; Oliver Parsons meanwhile mindful of Aunt Kezie, who was his especial charge.

"Don't let her know there is any trouble," he said earnestly. "It must be kept from her as far as possible. I expected the summons sooner ; and as long ago as when I first went to college, I began to save money for Loren.

Now, if he has been unfortunate, I will help him; if he has committed a crime, I will do the best I can for him conscientiously."

It was midnight when the young lawyer reached the city in which Carlton Briggs resided; but this friend was waiting for him at the depot, and with, "I knew you would come," grasped his hand and led him to a carriage. The drive was short and silent, no other word being spoken until they stood in the hall of the elegant house Carlton Briggs called "home."

"Supper first and business afterward," he then said. "Gertie and Carrie are both up, and expecting to see you."

They knew why he had come; yet, when they met Oliver Parsons, they made an effort to greet him cheerfully.

"You are always welcome, at any time of day or night," was the flattering assurance of his hostess. "You will have supper?"

"A cup of strong coffee, if you please," he replied; and although seated at a table spread with tempting viands, he declined to eat. "It is impossible," he responded, as the necessity of this was urged upon him.

"Then we will go to the library," said his host; and presently they were standing face to face in a room of which they were the only occupants.

"Is it the worst?" asked Oliver Parsons, in a low tone.

"It is murder," was replied.

"With robbery?"

"No."

"Thank God for that."

"Was it with malice aforethought?"

"I think not."

"Is there positive proof that Loren is the guilty party?"

"Only circumstantial, so far as I know. I read a notice of the murder in a daily, and wrote at once to a gentleman residing in the city where it transpired, asking him to ascertain the facts in the case and report to me. There is his letter, which you can read for yourself."

"I have visited the scene of the murder, and the facts, as I have learned them, are these," wrote the gentleman, adding:

"There was a quarrel over a game of cards, one party accusing the other of cheating; and as all engaged had been drinking freely, the excitement ran high. Words were succeeded by blows, and in the confusion two shots were fired, one inflicting a fatal wound. The victim was in hot altercation with Parsons at the time, and it is supposed that, in the anger of the moment, the deed was done.

"Parsons maintains his innocence; but he is a hard-looking customer, and circumstances are strongly against him. The only pity seems to be that the whole crowd were not killed and the rickety old house burned to the ground."

"I must see Loren as soon as possible," remarked the brother, after reading this communication. "I believe I can judge from his own words and appearance whether he is guilty. If innocent, I will clear him; if guilty—"

Here the speaker paused, and covering his face with his hands, remained silent for several minutes. When he spoke again, it was to say:

"Can you tell me the earliest possible minute when I can be on my way?"

"A train leaves in an hour, and I have already made arrangements for you to leave then, if you wish. I will go with you, too, if I can assist you."

"Thank you, Carl, but I will go alone. You can pray for me. That is what I asked of Fritz. I shall need the prayers of all my friends."

"Fritz is working hard?"

"As ever; but he can afford to work. He is the happiest man I know, and he has reason to be happy. A man who can win the love of such a woman as Carrie Lincoln may count himself rich beyond measure. And to think, Carl, there was a time when I hoped she would be my sister. But I must not look back. With so much before me, I can not afford to do it. There are not many women like your Cousin Carrie; yet Fritz is worthy of her."

"There are no women better than she; but I expect your wife will be as good, Noll."

"Don't speak of it, Carl. I may never have a wife. My first care must now be for my brother."

"You must not undertake more than is your duty."

"I shall not, unless I am mistaken in my estimate of duty. It is different with me now from what it was before I had acquired my profession. Aunt Kezie is well provided for, and my personal expenses can be reduced to a very small amount. Since we opened our office, we have done much better than we expected; so that ultimate success is only a question of hard work. In any event, there is a prospect that Fritz will be independent. He is one of three heirs to a large property, and has already taken the necessary legal steps to secure his rights. He cares

little for riches for himself, but I know it will be a delight to him to surround the woman he loves with every luxury. Carl, I envy you none of your possessions ; yet I sometimes wonder why the brother I loved so well could not have been something better than—a—drunkard."

CHAPTER XV.

THE DARK SIDE.

FOR once there was no delay on the part of the law. The suspected murderer had no influential friends to interfere in his behalf, and he was indicted for the crime of which he was accused, notwithstanding his continued protestations of innocence. Currier, who had been a faithful servant, was ready to make any sacrifice for him, yet this availed him nothing.

Committed to jail, where he was forced to abstain from all stimulants, he experienced such tortures as no pen can describe. Alone with himself, he could neither ignore the past nor remain indifferent to the future.

He thought of his old-time friends, numbering them one by one, and questioning who of all would come to his rescue. He must be rescued, or his doom was sealed; and yet it sometimes seemed to him he would rather die the most ignominious death than have his degradation known.

At length the door of his cell was opened to admit a visitor, who asked :

“Are you my brother, Loren Parsons?”

“Gracious heavens! is it Noll?” he said in reply.

“It is Noll, and you are—”

“I was your brother, but I am not fit to be your

brother now. I am not guilty of murder, though. Why, bless you, Noll, I never owned a pistol in my life. If I had any fighting to do, I did it with my fists. Burns and I had some high words, but I wouldn't kill a man for that. We had both been drinking whisky, and didn't see things alike. That was all there was to it. But I don't suppose all I can say will do any good. There won't anybody believe me, and I am too poor to pay a lawyer for defending me. So I can expect nothing better than—I can't say it; I won't say it. How is Aunt Keziah? Does she know?"

"She knows nothing of your arrest. She is very well, and living comfortably on the income of her farm. She has rented it to a good man, who, with his family, occupies a part of the house."

"And you, Noll, what are you doing?"

"Fritz Hurlin and I have opened a law-office."

"You and Fritz Hurlin, lawyers?"

"Yes; and I have come here to offer myself as your counsel."

"O Noll, God bless you for that. It is more than I deserve from you; but, as God hears me, I am not a murderer."

In the interview which followed, this assertion, often reiterated, carried with it a conviction of its truth.

"Noll, couldn't you bring me a glass of whisky the next time you come?" asked the prisoner, with averted face, as they were about to separate.

"Whether I could or no, I will not," was replied. "It is whisky which has brought you where you are, and if I could prevent it, you would never taste another drop of the accursed stuff. I have no wish to upbraid you for the

past, Loren ; but you know, as well as I, what has wrought your ruin. Pray God to forgive you, and help you to conquer your appetite for strong drink."

Convinced that his brother was suffering from an unjust accusation, Oliver Parsons lost no time in acquainting himself, as far as possible, with every detail of the murder. He visited the old saloon, examining the premises with the utmost care, asking questions of all with whom he came in contact, and noting the discrepancies in their statements. With Currier, who still occupied the room in the shed, he had many long conversations, each tending to strengthen his conviction of his brother's innocence.

The pistol, from which the fatal shot had been fired, could not be found. It was hastily assumed that Parsons had concealed it, although several witnesses were ready to testify that he had no possible opportunity for doing so. The evidence against him was based more upon his general character, than upon any positive knowledge of the affair in question.

The strain upon the young lawyer's powers of endurance was terrible, yet he did not relax his efforts to discover some clue to the guilty party. All in vain, however ; and a week before the time appointed for trial, he left to consult with his partner ; returning in season to make some last arrangements, and finding, as he had feared, that he must depend upon his own ability and eloquence.

It would be useless to linger over the details of the trial. The prosecuting attorney presented the case, a jury was impaneled, and witnesses called. Before the first day was over, Oliver Parsons had won the confidence and respect of all who saw him. When he made the closing plea for the defense, he carried with him judge, jury, and

spectators. The jury brought in a verdict of "Not guilty," and the prisoner was once more free.

He would have rushed at once from the courtroom, had not his brother laid a detaining hand upon him, saying, in a low voice :

"You will go with me. You owe me something for having saved your life, and I insist that you go with me. There is a carriage waiting for us."

So they went out together, these brothers ; one, the acknowledged peer of the most gifted and cultured ; the other, branded as a drunkard and gambler of the lowest type. They entered a carriage and were driven to a hotel, where supper was served for them in a private room.

In all his intercourse with his brother, it had been difficult for Oliver Parsons to realize their relationship ; more difficult still to presume upon this relationship as forming a bond of sympathy between them. He had struggled hard against the feeling of aversion which at times almost overpowered his will ; and he knew, also, that this feeling was mutual. Yet he had a duty to perform.

"Loren, what do you propose to do ?" he asked, when sure that no one would intrude upon their privacy. "It is not too late for you to start anew," he added, when no response was made to his question.

"You talk like a baby," cried the man thus addressed. "You don't know anything about it. You are a splendid fellow, and I should be proud of you if there was enough left of me. But you see what I am. No, you don't see, either, for the worst is out of sight. It's no use trying to make believe, Noll. You and I were born brothers, and I had a fair chance in the world ; but I threw my chance

away. I threw it away. You don't know what that means, but I know all about it. You are going up and I am going down. On the way we have crossed each other's tracks."

"Let it not be a mere crossing of tracks," responded the younger brother. "I am ready to help you, if you will only help yourself."

"Help myself, Noll! Let me tell you how it is with me. I would rather live in my old saloon, vile as everybody has sworn it was, with plenty of whisky to drink, than live in a palace, the possessor of millions, without the whisky. I must go my own way, Noll, and you can't help it. No use preaching. I always hated it. I thank you for all you have done for me, and the sooner you forget me the better it will be for us both."

Perhaps Oliver Parsons was prepared for even this. Certain it is that he offered no further remonstrance, although he made provision for his brother's support. When satisfied that he could do nothing more, he returned to his business, with a deeper hatred for the drink which curses the world.

Three months later Loren Parsons was arrested as a common drunkard, and died in the station-house of delirium tremens.

Thus ended the career of one who bartered everything which makes life worth the living, for—"a jolly time."

THE WORKING-MAN'S LOAF.

THE WORKING-MAN'S LOAF.

CHAPTER I.

LEARNING ECONOMY.

"I HAVE started the fire for you," said Robert Winter to his sister Mary, who had come home only the night before, after a five years' absence in the country. "I thought you wouldn't know where to find things; 'though generally there aren't many things to find."

"Where is father? I thought I heard him before I came down," responded the young girl who was already discouraged at the prospect before her.

"Gone after his beer."

"Beer! Does father drink beer?"

"Guess you'd think so, if you knew as much about it as I do. He always goes for some before breakfast; then he takes another mug on his way to the shop; another after dinner, and I don't know how many more."

"It must cost a good deal of money."

"Of course it does. Men who sell beer sell it for money, and I think it is pretty mean to spend so much for what a man can do without better than not, and then be always complaining of how much

it costs to support a family. I hope you can make things different, but mother can't; and she is all discouraged. She didn't send for you as long as she could do the work. She hated to have you come to such a poor place."

"Never mind that, now, Robert. Tell me where the coffee is."

"I know where it ought to be, but half the time there isn't any, the same as now."

"Then bring some tea."

"Father don't like tea."

"What will he drink with his breakfast?"

"Nothing, and make up with beer afterward."

"Is there any meat to be cooked?"

"No; we don't have meat for breakfast, and I don't know of anything in the house to eat, except some bread and butter. The bread is pretty dry, but perhaps father'll bring a fresh loaf when he comes back."

"I could make a nice toast if I had some milk."

"Not a drop in the house. We used to have a milkman come every day, but since we moved here we buy it at the corner store, when we have any. There comes father. You can ask him for money to pay for some milk, if you want to, and I will go for it."

Upon the request being made, Mr. Winter fumbled in his pockets, and at last gave Mary pennies to buy a pint of milk, saying a little sharply:

"We can't afford to use milk as they do at your Uncle Daniel's. You'll have to learn economy, if you are going to live with us."

"Why, father ; Aunt Rachel is the most economical woman in town, and she has taught me her way of doing things," answered Mary. "I don't think you will have any reason to complain of my extravagance."

"Well, well, child, I didn't mean to blame you ; only money comes hard, and we must be careful how we spend it."

Fortunately, there was plenty of butter for the toast, and enough was saved from the scanty pint of milk for Mrs. Winter's tea. Mr. Winter ate his breakfast in silence, and was hurrying away when his daughter said to him :

"I suppose you will send home something for dinner."

"I sha'n't have any time to see to it," he replied ; adding, as he threw down a quarter : "You must make that go as far as you can for dinner. I guess the last potatoes I bought are all gone, so you must look out for some."

Before Mary had time to think what she could do with so small an amount, her younger brothers came down, clamoring for breakfast. More toast was made, leaving only two slices of bread for her mother and herself. Then the boys rushed out, and she was left alone.

Presently her mother called, and she went into the little bedroom, looking as cheerful as possible, that she might not add to the burden she wished to lighten.

"I will bring you a cup of tea and some toast, and then perhaps you will feel able to come into

the kitchen and tell me what you would like to have me do to-day," she said, after listening to complaints of wakefulness and a severe headache.

"Do anything you please, only don't trouble me about it," was replied. "I am so tired, trying to do with nothing, that I don't care much what happens, if I can only rest. It is hard for you, child; coming from your Uncle Daniel's, too, where they have enough of everything. I hope you won't blame me for sending for you."

"No, mother. I shall be glad if I can help you, but I don't know what there is in the house to do with."

"There isn't much of anything. That is the trouble, child. Your father used to be a good provider, when we were first married; but he has changed. I don't want to find fault with him. I don't suppose I have done as well as I might, but I am clear discouraged. Have you learned to cook?"

"Yes, mother. Aunt Rachel was sick, last year, and I did all the cooking for more than three months."

"You had enough to cook with."

"Yes, mother; but Uncle Daniel and Aunt Rachel are obliged to be economical in everything. All the boys want to go to college, and Uncle Daniel says if they do, money must be found under every stone on the old farm."

"They have four boys, the same as we, and your father says our boys must go to work to earn their own living."

"I thought father earned good wages."

"He does. He earns enough to send you all to school, and provide all we need. But I won't say any more about it. You will find it all out for yourself before you have been here a great while. I hope you will manage better than I have, and perhaps your father will hear to you more than he has to me."

"But if you and I should try together, mother."

"I can't try," interrupted Mrs. Winter. "If I was fit to die, I should wish I was dead and out of the way."

"Think of the boys; how much they need you."

"I have thought of them until I am almost crazy. They are running wild, and I can't help it. They were good little boys, but they are all wrong now. Robert learned to read when he wasn't much more than a baby, and I was so proud of him, I calculated he would make a grand scholar."

The mother's face lighted up with something like animation, while talking of her boys as they had been; but when recalled to present necessities, she only reiterated her inability to meet the demands of the hour.

"If you have twenty-five cents, you have more than I have had for a long time. You must make it go as far as you can," she said at last, sighing wearily.

It was some relief to Mary when she found that the tea and toast she had prepared were evidently relished; yet when she returned to the kitchen and saw the disorder around her, she began to weep. She knew not what to do. How she longed for

some one to advise and comfort her! Just then, as if in answer to her wish, while tears were streaming down her cheeks, a neatly dressed old lady opened the kitchen door and came in.

"I am one of your neighbors, and I wanted to see you," said the visitor cheerily. "I knew your mother was expecting you, and I thought, may be you would be glad to see even an old woman like me. I hope you aren't home-sick."

"I am afraid I was, but you look so much like one of Aunt Rachel's neighbors, I think my home-sickness will go away. I can't tell you how glad I am you came," responded Mary.

"I am glad, too. I had a daughter by the name of Mary, and the glint of her hair was like yours. I am always looking to find one like her. She and her father left me the same week, and I have missed them ever since; 'though there was never a better boy than my Ernest. Ernest Landaff is his name, and I am Mrs. Landaff. I was on my way to market. I thought perhaps you would be going out to buy your dinner."

"I don't know how to buy a dinner. I have only twenty-five cents for everything. It is all different from what it was at Uncle Daniel's, and mother says she can't help me. I don't know how to begin."

"What have you in the house?"

"A little tea and some butter. It took all the bread for breakfast, and there isn't any flour."

"Then we must get some corn-meal. I will show you how to make good cakes with no better mixing than hot water and salt. You must have some cof

fee, with sugar and milk, for your father; then a few potatoes and some bones for a soup. You won't have that ready until supper, but it will be something to look forward to, and most men are willing to take soup for supper. You won't mind my telling you that men and boys are more likely to stay at home if things are made tidy and pleasant for them. If your father sees that you do well with twenty-five cents, he may give you more to-morrow; and as soon as you can, it will be best for you to buy in larger quantities. Get the boys on your side, and you can do almost anything."

"Do you believe I can?" asked Mary.

"Yes, if you start right. Do your best, and ask God to bless your efforts," was replied.

"Oh, Mrs. Landaff, you are a Christian; I know you are, or you wouldn't have said that. It is the first Christian word I have heard since I came here. It is all so different from what it was at Uncle Daniel's."

"But remember, my dear, you can pray, as well here as there, and you can keep your hands busy at the same time. Your mother has been so poorly, it is no wonder the work has gone behind. If you have only corn-cake and butter for dinner, it will be relished better if your table is set neatly. You know how to do that."

"Yes, ma'am, I do, and I will try to make the room so pleasant, mother will be glad to see it."

CHAPTER II.

CORN-CAKE AND MILK.

"WELL, well, Mary, this looks comfortable," said Mr. Winter, when he came in to dinner. "The coffee smells good too. And corn-cakes, I declare. I haven't seen any on our table for years."

"I hope you will like them," was responded.

"No trouble about that. Here, Robert, go for two quarts of milk, and we will have an old-fashioned dinner. Don't stop on the way."

Robert was soon back, and everybody praised the dinner, except Mary, who found it impossible to eat a single mouthful.

"Soup for supper, did you say?" remarked her father, as he was preparing to leave the house, after she had told him of her marketing. "I never imagined a quarter could be made to go so far; but you will need money to buy some bread."

He threw down a dime, and when he had gone, Robert said :

"I can get ever so much broken bread for ten cents. It is just as good as the loaves, only it is broken."

"Then get it; and while you are away, I will make a cup of tea for mother. Perhaps we can persuade her to come out here to drink it."

"I wish you would. Mother has had a hard time,

I am old enough to know that, but it doesn't make things any better, to complain and not try."

"No, Robert, it doesn't. I am going to try, and I want you to help me."

"I will. I am not the worst fellow in the world, and may be, if you should take me in hand, you might make something of me."

There was a quiver in the boy's voice as he said this, and a tear in his eye as he hurried from the room; leaving Mary to wonder at what had transpired. She was thankful the dinner had proved a success; but there was still much to be done, and she was so tired, it seemed impossible for her to work on through the day. Yet when Robert returned, bringing a generous supply of bread for both supper and breakfast, she tried to look on the bright side.

"I never got half so much before, and it is all good too," he said pleasantly; adding: "If you were like Mrs. Landaff, you would put all the small pieces by themselves, and make the rest look so nice, there wouldn't anybody mind its being broken."

"Do you know how to do it?"

"I guess I could. If I should wash my hands real clean, should you be willing I should try?"

"I should be glad to have you."

"Then here goes, and after it is all spread on the plates, you coax mother out here. I should think she would do almost anything you want her to. I would. I tell you, Mary, it has been pretty awful since we moved here. This is the worst place we ever lived in. We always had one room besides

the kitchen and bedrooms. The bedrooms were a good deal larger too. It is awful dark and poky here when it storms."

"It would be lighter, if we should give the windows a good scrubbing."

"So it would, and I am ready to help you do it. Mother used to keep things cleaner. I did the best I could with the floor yesterday, but it don't look very well. The boys wouldn't let it dry without being tracked."

"Where are the boys now?"

"Somewhere around. They will keep pretty well out of the way until they get hungry."

"But they ought not to be in the street. Don't they go to school?"

"They did, before we came here. Since then, they have been too ragged to go anywhere decent."

"About Sunday, Robert. What do you all do then?"

"The same as other days. What did you do at Uncle Daniel's?"

"We went to church and Sunday-school. Then we read our Bibles and our library books, and when it was so dark we couldn't see without a lamp, we sung and talked together. Aunt Rachel said we ought to make a Sabbath day's journey towards Heaven."

"If that is the way you lived there, you can't ever live with us. Father don't mind anything about Sunday. He isn't a bit like Aunt Rachel."

"I am afraid he isn't; but they were brought up together, and she told me I must try to lead

him back into the right path. Do you think I could?"

"Perhaps so, if you could get him to stop drinking beer."

"Does mother drink beer?" asked Mary half under her breath.

"She does when she can get it, but father don't let her have much lately," was replied.

"Do you drink it?"

"No, I don't. I used to, but I stopped that and tobacco more than a year ago. Will drinks it when he can get it, and he smokes too."

"What of Clem and Luke?"

"Well, Clem isn't so bad, but if Luke goes on as he has begun, he will be the worst of the lot. We are a bad set, anyway, and it must be dreadful for you to come to live with us."

"I was sorry to come, but Aunt Rachel said it was my duty, and if I can make things better, I sha'n't mind the hard work. If you will stand by me, we can do a good deal."

"I will. You can count on me every time," said the boy heartily. "It was a letter you wrote to me that made me give up beer and tobacco."

"But, Robert, it takes money to buy beer and tobacco. How did you get the money?"

"Worked for it. Sometimes I did jobs 'round the saloons, and almost anything else. Men and boys will do more to get tobacco and liquor than they will to get something to eat when they are hungry. Didn't you know that?"

"I don't know much about tobacco and liquor,

except what I have read ; only I remember that father used to smoke. Uncle Daniel won't have tobacco on his premises. The boys have all promised never to use it ; and as for beer, or liquor of any kind, I don't believe they know how it tastes."

"I wish I didn't, and I wish my brothers didn't."

"Does father like to have them drink beer and smoke?"

"You wouldn't think he did, by the way he scolds them when he sees them at it ; but he doesn't seem to care much, if they only keep out of his sight."

While thus talking, the bread had been nicely assorted ; the best slices being saved for mother, and laid on the only really pretty plate in the house.

"Now, if I had some of Aunt Rachel's currant jelly, I believe I could tempt mother to come to the table," said Mary.

At that moment Will looked into the kitchen, when his brother asked him if he had any money.

"Yes ; earned it since dinner," was replied.

"Lend it to me, to get some jelly for mother," said Robert ; "I will pay you to-morrow."

"But I want it now. I am awful dry, and I haven't had a smoke to-day."

A boy twelve years old, he seemed to consider that these two facts entitled him to sympathy ; and without staying to hear more, closed the door behind him.

"Such depravity !" exclaimed his sister. "What will become of him ! What is father thinking about, to let him go on so !"

"A man who does as father does can't say much

to his boys for following his example," answered Robert, with an air of indifference.

"No, I don't suppose he can; but I wish I was back at Uncle Daniel's, and didn't know anything about it," sobbed Mary, adding presently: "Why, you aren't even respectable. I have read about people living so, but I never expected to live so myself."

"Don't cry; don't," urged the boy, coming close to his sister, and resting his hand upon her shoulder. "I know it is dreadful for you. I have wanted to run away and get out of it; but when I knew you was coming, I thought perhaps there would be a chance for me here at home. There is an evening school, not very far off, where they teach just what I want to learn. If I could be clean and decent, to go there evenings, I shouldn't mind working days."

"You *can* be and you *shall* be," responded Mary, throwing her arms around his neck and kissing him. "If it depends upon me, you shall have a chance to be somebody. Aunt Rachel says where two are agreed about anything, they can do wonders, with the Lord's blessing; and, Robert, we will ask the Lord to bless us, won't we?"

"I am afraid I don't know about that, but I will do the best I can, and you must do the rest," answered Robert to this proposition, and so their compact was sealed.

Then their thoughts turned to their mother, who, after much persuasion, was induced to come into the kitchen; not, however, until she had complained of weakness, and asked Robert if there was any ale or beer in the house. He was glad to be able to tell

her there was none ; and as she had no money she did not presume to say more about it. He endeavored to interest her in some plans for the improvement of their home ; but she professed herself utterly indifferent. She drank the tea prepared for her, and ate two slices of toast, saying, at last, that she wished the soup had been ready for dinner.

"Your father will like it. He always liked soup, and I am glad Mary could get so much with so little money. Mrs. Landaff is a good friend to have, 'though she gives her advice sometimes when she isn't asked. Her son has the letting of some of the houses 'round here, and that is why they moved into this street."

"Ernest Landaff isn't much like the other men on the street," replied Robert. "I wish I knew as much as he does."

"I wish you could have a chance in the world, but your father says you must go to work, and I suppose you must," said his mother.

"All the same, I am going to have a chance, mother. Mary is going to help me ; and if we all try together, we can make things better here at home ; I know we can."

Meanwhile, Mary had commenced a thorough work in her mother's room, which she continued, notwithstanding objections and protestations ; effecting such an improvement as to call forth some words of commendation.

"Your Aunt Rachel was always particular, and so was your grandmother," said Mrs. Winter. "Your father used to talk a good deal about it, but he don't care how things look now."

CHAPTER III.

LIKE HER GRANDMOTHER.

WHEN Mr. Winter came from his work that evening, he looked around for a minute, and then went into the shed, where on a rough bench he found a basin of water and some soap; while hanging above it were a clean towel, a bit of looking-glass, and a comb. With these conveniences before him, he could not neglect to use them; and this done, he wished he was better dressed.

Supper was on the table, which was covered with a white cloth; and what was more surprising still, the boys presented an array of clean faces. The soup was good, and the coffee, although not strong, was palatable. Mary thought she had never been so tired before in all her life, but her father more than repaid her for what she had done, when he said :

“You make me think of your grandmother. She knew how to do everything in the best way. You have done so well with your marketing, I will give you fifty cents for to-morrow; and I may as well give it to you now, before I have a chance to spend it.”

“Thank you,” she replied, as she took the money; thinking of what she would buy for her mother.

Her father lingered a little after eating his sup-

per, yet she was not disappointed when he left the house, knowing, as she did, that he would probably spend the remainder of the evening in a beer-saloon. Robert kept his brothers with him, and induced them to go early to bed. Mrs. Winter desired to be left to herself, and Mary was glad when the last work for the day was done, and she could go to the closet-like room where she was to sleep. As soon as he heard her step, Robert came in, apologizing for his intrusion by saying :

"I wanted to tell you how much good you have done me. I begin to feel as though I might, sometime, know more and be better than I am now. Are you going to read in the Bible?" he asked, as she took the precious book in her hand.

"Yes, I am," she replied. "I read in it every day."

"Then let me hear you."

After reading a chapter, Mary waited for a minute, and then falling upon her knees, prayed earnestly for a blessing upon each member of the family; calling each by name. Rising, she turned with a questioning glance to her brother, who said :

"I will do my part of the work, and I know I shall be better. I can't help it, now you are here."

The next morning was not so bad as the preceding. The children were all in their places at the table; and after breakfast, without really knowing how it was accomplished, they were all busy in helping to carry out their sister's plans. The little yard in front of the house was cleared of rubbish. The shed was swept; the outside of the windows was

washed ; and plenty of water was brought for washing clothes.

Will, who was an inveterate whittler, had been furnished with a pattern for a bracket, which he proposed to cut from an old cigar-box. When told of what his cousins had accomplished in that way, he said resolutely :

"I can do as well as they can. I don't allow any boy to go ahead of me, when I get started."

"Then I hope you will start in the right way, and"—

"And what?" he asked, looking to Mary, who had left her sentence unfinished.

"Stick to teetotal temperance."

"So that's it, is it," he responded with a knowing wink. "Is that what they are doing at Uncle Daniel's?"

"Yes, every one of them," was replied.

"I don't know about that for us. You see, we live in the city, and that makes a difference."

Here the subject was dropped. Mary was ready to go out, and she thought Will could be safely left to his own reflections. Presuming upon the kindness of Mrs. Landaff, she called to ask further advice.

"You have started well," said this neighbor, when told what had been accomplished. "Now if you have patience to continue in well doing, you will be sure of a reward."

"I shall do as well as I can," answered the young girl, who was fast learning some of the hard lessons of life.

With Mrs. Landaff's assistance, the half-dollar was judiciously expended. On their way home, they were met by Robert, who took his sister's parcels, asking her to hurry.

"Mother came out and wanted Will to get her some beer," he whispered confidentially. "There is an old woman that lives in an alley back of us who keeps beer to sell, and takes almost anything for pay. I told Will not to stir a step, but—— There he is, this minute."

Robert left the parcels, and with a bound rushed after his brother, whom he presently led into the kitchen. When Mrs. Winter saw them, she asked no questions, but with a look upon her face expressing both mortification and disappointment, she went to her room.

"There, now, don't you ever bring a drop of beer into this house for anybody," said Robert, as he released the culprit.

"Mother told me to get it, and Luke heard her," was replied sulkily. "It isn't any worse for her to drink beer, than it is for father. Beer is good. It makes folks strong, and I like it."

Here followed an animated discussion of its merits, and of the value of money. In this discussion all took part, and several questions were settled by vote, which Mary took care should seem of some importance. Later in the day, she went to her mother's room and asked abruptly :

"What is to be done about the boys' clothes? They are ragged and dirty. If you would help about it, we could make them more decent, but I

can never do it alone. I am sure you would be better if you would go out of doors a little. We should all be so much happier, too, to have you with us. It must be lonely for father when he comes home, and you not ready to meet him."

"Your father don't care, if he can only get all the beer and tobacco he wants," replied the woman in a querulous tone. "He drinks and smokes so much, there isn't anything left for the rest of us. A glass of beer does me good when I am so weak and faint, but he wants it all himself."

"I don't believe beer does anybody good," replied Mary. "Anyway, I should think things were about as bad as they can be here. Robert and I are going to do the best we can. We don't mean to be dragged down by beer or any other kind of liquor. If Robert can't go to a day-school, he is going in the evening, and I am going to help him all I can to be a good scholar."

"That sounds like your father. He used to think he could do anything he undertook."

"I don't believe but what he can, mother. He can give up drinking beer, and save money to buy a pretty home, if we all help him."

"Why, child, what has come over you!" exclaimed Mrs. Winter, raising her head from the pillow, and looking earnestly in her daughter's face.

"Nothing new, mother. Aunt Rachel brought me up to be sure of some things. She makes up her mind what is best to do, and then she does it."

"You can't expect me to be like your Aunt Rachel," said Mrs. Winter.

"I wish you were," said Mary involuntarily, and then blamed herself for having spoken without taking time to choose her words.

"I didn't think you would turn against me so soon," sobbed the unhappy mother. "Your father finds fault with me, and that is all I can bear. I know it is hard for you, child," she added in a different tone.

"It *is* hard," was replied gently. "I am used to work, but I have always had some time for rest, every day, even when Aunt Rachel was sickest. I am willing to do all I can, but it is too much for me to do all the work needed in this family. I can not live in a dirty house, and see the boys covered with rags, instead of wearing decent clothes."

"What *will* you do?"

"If I can not have things more respectable, I shall write to Aunt Rachel about it, and ask her what my duty is."

"Your father would feel dreadfully to have her know how he lives."

"Then he must live differently. We must all go to work together and have a comfortable home."

"Mother Winter over again, and I never could suit her," sighed her daughter-in-law, when Mary had returned to the kitchen.

CHAPTER IV.

DISCOURAGED.

"It is no more than I expected," said Mrs. Landaff, in response to Robert Winter's announcement that his sister was too sick to go down-stairs. "A girl like her can hardly go through such a fortnight's work as she has had, without suffering for it. I know you have helped her all you could, but the hardest of it has come upon her."

"I know it, Mrs. Landaff, and I don't know what we shall do now. I got breakfast, myself, this morning, and we boys washed the dishes and made things look as well as we could. But there is the dinner to get."

"What did your father say?"

"Said he was sorry about Mary, and I must take good care of her. There is another thing that troubles me, Mrs. Landaff. Now the new beer-saloon is opened at the head of the street, I am afraid it will be worse for father, and I am afraid the boys will go there, in spite of all I can do. Then we shall be worse off than ever before. It seems as though the beer men have their saloons in the very worst places for everybody. I wish all the beer in the world was poured into the ocean, and there couldn't be any more made."

"I wish so too, Robert; but our wishing will not

make it so. We can only try to prevent people drinking it. The first thing to do now is to look after Mary."

"She wanted me to ask you to please come over and see her. She said it would make her feel better. Mother don't do anything for her."

Mrs. Landaff needed no urging. Accompanying Robert, she went to his sister's room, which she found as clean as it could be made with only soap and water ; although, at best, it was a dreary place, with its dingy walls, bare floor, and hard, narrow bed.

"You are so kind," murmured the tired girl. "I didn't know what to do but send for you."

"Poor child ; I am glad you did. You have overworked, and need rest. You must lie here until you feel better."

"But how can I, when I am needed in the kitchen every minute ! I could not stand long enough to dress myself this morning. Oh, dear ! I wish I was back at Uncle Daniel's. Sometimes I almost wish I never had gone there. Then I shouldn't know the difference between there and here."

"The difference is what you need to know, so that you can teach the rest. Think of Robert. You have done a work for him, already, that will pay for a good many hours of headache."

"I couldn't stay here if it was not for him."

"He says you cooked enough, yesterday, to last two or three days."

"I did, except meat. It seemed so good to have enough to use, that I kept right on cooking. I

planned to do some sewing to-day, but I must give that up. I always have a sick day when I get too tired; but Aunt Rachel was so careful about it, I didn't have a great many. I am afraid mother will go back to her old discouraged ways, and there is something else too. Do you know about it?"

"Yes, dear, I know all about it, and it don't do any good for you to worry. You can trust Robert not to let anything wrong happen until you can go down. I always liked Robert, and Ernest says there is more good in him than you would think at first sight. He doesn't have anything to do with the boys around here."

"It seems to me a dreadful place to live."

"There are many worse. But you are talking too much for the good of your head. Should you mind if I should send you a little table for your room? I have one I am not using, and I should be glad to lend it to you."

"I should be very thankful for it. I had a prettier room at Uncle Daniel's."

"Then I will have Robert bring it over. It will just fit this corner."

Mrs. Landaff said good-bye and was gone, but her visit had done much to comfort her young neighbor. Presently Will asked to come in, bringing tea and toast. Then appeared Robert with the little table and its scarlet cover, which so brightened up the room that it seemed far less dreary to its occupant. Clem brought her two geranium leaves he had found in the street, and her mother sent her a pleasant message.

After all, there were some compensations for her illness, and thinking of these, she fell asleep. It was past noon when she awoke, and although she was still weak, her headache was quite gone, and she could think clearly. Just before supper, Robert opened her door softly, impatient to tell her of the opening of the new saloon.

"They give free lunches all this afternoon and evening," he said in an excited tone. "Codfish and crackers, to make everybody dry, and then there will be a big sale of beer. That is the way they do. I have kept watch of the boys, so they haven't been there, but father will be sure to go."

"Will he go before he comes home?"

"I don't believe he will; but then you can't ever tell what such a man will do. O Mary, you don't know; but it is the beer, and tobacco, and liquor, that keeps folks so awfully poor. They live all around in these houses. Ernest Landaff says he is going to see what he can do about it."

"Are he and his mother very poor?"

"Not very, 'though they used to be richer. They lost lots of money that was in a bank and some other place; and that is the reason Ernest has to work to take care of his mother. He expects to be better off sometime, and I hope he will. He is just splendid. He has asked me, two or three times, to go to Sunday-school, but I didn't say anything to you about it, because I haven't decent clothes to wear, and I can't get them either. When I go to work I will have them; but, Mary, there are two places where I won't work, no matter what father says. I

won't work in a cigar factory, or in a liquor-saloon of any kind."

"What if father tells you to?"

"I will run away to Uncle Daniel's, and get him to find me a place with some farmer. You see I have thought it all over. I have made up my mind and I will stick to it. There are lots of hard places where boys work, but I don't mind the hard."

"Never mind about that now, Robert. There will be a way out of our trouble if we only do as well as we can. This morning, I was so discouraged, I thought it would be easier to die than try to go any further, but I feel differently now. I didn't know there was so much wickedness in the world till I came here, and it seems to me that most of it comes from what Uncle Daniel calls the cursed liquor."

"It does. Why, it is just awful. Men who begin with beer don't very often stop with it. They take to whisky after a while. I think father drinks whisky sometimes."

"Oh! don't say that, or I shall be discouraged again. I want to look on the bright side if there is any."

"You must *make* it before you can *look* on it."

CHAPTER V.

THE BURSTING OF THE STORM.

ROBERT knew from appearances that "a storm was brewing," yet wisely forbore to trouble his sister with anticipations of evil. Since her illness her father had treated her with more consideration, giving her money for various purposes without complaint or dictation. All this was changed, however, when one morning she asked for her usual allowance.

"Make the most of it, for I don't know when you will get any more," he said surlily. "The company talk of cutting down our wages, and if they do I shall strike. It is all I can do to live now. A cut-down would starve us out, and I shall strike."

"Strike!" repeated Mary.

"Yes; quit work until the company comes to terms," answered her father.

"And so earn nothing?"

"Yes; I am not a slave to work for starvation wages. If they won't give me fair wages, I won't work."

"How much will they cut you down?"

"Ten per cent. is what they are talking of, and that will make forty cents a day difference with me."

"Forty cents!" exclaimed the daughter in a tone

expressing the utmost astonishment. "Do you earn four dollars a day?"

"Yes, about that," was replied with some hesitation.

"That is more than a thousand dollars a year. Aunt Rachel would say we ought to live on half of that, and live well too."

"She don't know anything of what it costs to live here in the city, where we have to buy everything we eat, and pay rent besides. They own their house and farm."

"But I have heard Uncle Daniel say he earned the money to pay for them, and he never had more than twenty-five dollars a month besides his board. There was a small mortgage on the farm when he was married, and he and Aunt Rachel worked hard to pay it. They would think themselves rich if they had five hundred dollars a year to live on."

"So should we, but we don't have it now," said Robert. "Men earn enough; that isn't the trouble; it is the way they spend their money. Most of it goes for beer, and whisky, and tobacco; and the women and children have to live on the leavings."

At this, Mr. Winter's face was fairly livid with rage, yet he did not deny his son's statement. He only replied:

"When you act for yourself, we will see what you do with your money."

"Yes, sir; but I can tell you now, that I shall have decent clothes and a decent house to live in. What I earn won't go for beer or tobacco."

"You can do as you please, and so shall I," was

responded, as if thus the whole matter was settled.

"But, father, here we are, and we can not any of us do as we please. We are obliged to do as we can, and you are the one to decide what we *can* do. I don't want to speak disrespectful to you, but I think it is dreadful to live as we do. Now I know how much you earn, I know there is no need of it. We could live decently on half what you earn, and we don't live decently now, do we, father?"

Mary waited for a reply to her question, and receiving none, asked another :

"Father, wouldn't you like to live in a pleasant house, with nice, clean rooms, and have a garden, with trees and flowers?"

"Of course I should like it, if I could afford it. Who wouldn't? But I don't intend to be catechized by my children, or told what I ought to do. I can manage my own affairs without any of their help."

Mary heartily wished this was true, although she did not say so. Had she been like many young girls, she would have given up in despair, and made no further effort to stem the tide. But perseverance was one of her marked characteristics, and there was too much at stake to be easily relinquished. So she struggled on until help appeared in the person of Aunt Rachel, who came unheralded.

"Brother Robert!" exclaimed the fine-looking woman, who met Mr. Winter as he came into the kitchen, where she had already made herself quite at home.

"You here, Rachel!" he responded, while his man-

ner betrayed the utmost surprise, not unmingled with regret.

"Yes, I am here. I wished to see how Mary would manage as a housekeeper, and besides, Robert, I wished to see you, my only brother. Mary had been with us so long, she seemed like one of our own. The boys miss her, too, as much as my husband and I do, and they told me to be sure and take her back with me ; but we won't talk of that now."

"I don't think we will. We never can spare her again very long at a time. She makes me think of mother every day."

"She is a good deal like her grandmother. I could always see that. If she undertakes to do anything, she is likely to go through with it. You and I have changed since we saw each other before. It has been longer than it ought to be."

"I don't see as you have changed much, Rachel. Your cheeks are a little fuller, and you have some gray hairs, but you are nearly the same as five years ago. *I* have changed."

"Yes, you have. You have grown stouter, and you have more color in your face. I hope your health is good."

"Pretty good generally."

Rachel Stearns talked on, seeking thus to cover her own feelings, as well as the evident chagrin of her brother. He had not told her that he was glad to see her, and indeed, she could not help knowing that he regretted her coming. Mrs. Winter, too, was troubled at the unexpected visit, but the boys were delighted.

"Where will Aunt Rachel sleep?" asked Robert, anxious for her comfort.

"She must sleep with me; there is no other place," replied Mary.

"But such a small room, and such a hard bed. Father is ashamed; I know he is, and I am glad of it. Mother is ashamed too. Perhaps it will make her start up to do better. Anyway, Aunt Rachel has come at the right time. Ernest Landaff says the men in the shop where father works are going to strike to-morrow or the day after, and, I don't know certain, but I think father has engaged a place for me in a cigar factory. I mean to tell Aunt Rachel all about it."

Mr. Winter did not go out after supper except for a short smoke. He devoted the evening to his sister, with whom he talked of old times and old friends, their conversation at length drifting back to their own families and fortunes.

"The farm has given us a good living, with plenty of hard work," remarked Mrs. Stearns. "We don't expect to make money as you do, but we manage to lay by a little every year, and now the boys are getting older, their father makes some ventures he would hardly think of making alone. Our boys are all scholars. How is it with yours?"

"I don't know so much about that, perhaps, as I ought to," replied Mr. Winter. "The truth is, I have left the children mostly for their mother to manage. I go to my work pretty early, and when I get through at night, I am too tired to do much more than get ready for bed. I should be glad to give my boys a

chance to go to school, but what with sickness and hard times, I haven't managed to do any more than make the year come 'round ; so I don't see any way but they must go to work."

"Our boys have always worked, but they have never missed school when there was one, any more than Mary has. We had planned to send her and Nelson to an academy, next year. It would require economy to do it ; but we are used to economy, and they would learn enough to pay all the cost. I wonder if you know how good a scholar Mary is."

"I am afraid not. She has been so busy about the house since she came home, that we haven't thought of much else. When her mother gets stronger I hope she will have an easier time."

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNWELCOME GUEST.

MR. WINTER had received a new revelation. He had thought of his daughter only as a worker, bound to give him her best service. True, he had known that it could not be a pleasant change for her to leave the old farm-house, in which she had spent five years, and come to such a home as he would give her, but he had by no means appreciated the sacrifice she thus made. It was because of her delicate health that she had been intrusted to Aunt Rachel's care, and now that she was well and strong, her place seemed to her father to be with him, although he had little to offer in return for the services he claimed.

Thinking of all this, he passed a sleepless night, and arose the next morning in no enviable frame of mind ; when, to add to his discomfort, his sister was the first to meet him.

"Do you go to your work before breakfast?" she asked, as he turned to greet her.

"No, but I was going out to do an errand," he answered. "I rather think some meat is needed for breakfast."

"Then I will go with you," was responded heartily. "I am always an early riser, and I should like to see how people look about here when they first get up."

Mr. Winter knew his sister too well to attempt to leave her behind ; so he made a virtue of necessity, and went to the nearest market instead of the saloon. For once, he was obliged to dispense with his mug of beer, as an appetizer for breakfast; which, however, was so much better than usual, that he did it ample justice.

He went out directly, but after walking a short distance, he turned back and called to Robert, who went to him at once, when he said :

"I engaged a place for you in Hunter's cigar factory, on Cross Street, yesterday, and I told him you would be there in good season to-day. So you can go right along now, without going to the house again."

"No, sir ; I shall not work in a cigar factory," answered the boy. "I promised, and wrote it out in black and white, more than a year ago, that I never would have anything to do with tobacco again as long as I live. I am bound to keep my promise, and I couldn't if I went into the cigar factory to work. Besides, I hate the very thought of it. I will do anything else, except to work in a drinking-saloon. I don't care how hard or how dirty it is."

"You will work where I put you," responded Mr. Winter, so angry that it was with difficulty he could speak.

"Yes, sir ; except in a cigar factory or drinking-saloon," was the fearless reply.

"Has Mary been putting you up to this ?"

"No, sir ; I put myself up to it. I have thought of it a good while and made up my mind." Then

the boy's voice changed to one of entreaty, rather than defiance, as he said: "Father, I want to be somebody, and have a chance in the world, the same as my cousins. I don't expect to be helped as they are, but I want to be left so I can do for myself. I don't want to grow up like the men in this neighborhood. I should rather die."

This appeal touched the father's heart; yet too proud to acknowledge it, he gruffly bade Robert to leave him and say no more.

Mrs. Stearns had not expected to find her brother's family living as they should, yet she was wholly unprepared for what she saw. Mary had done all that a young girl could do under such unfavorable circumstances; but there was needed a thorough and radical change, quite beyond the power of any one person to effect. She was considering how far she might venture in the way of remonstrance and advice, when her nephew rushed in, exclaiming:

"There, Mary, I have done it. Father told me to go to work in a cigar factory, and I told him I wouldn't. I said I would go anywhere else, except into a drinking-saloon; but I never will work there or in a cigar factory."

"Cigar factory!" repeated Aunt Rachel, taking the boy by the shoulders, and turning him around so that she could look him squarely in the face.

"Yes, ma'am," he answered. "It is a place full of tobacco. You have to handle it and breathe it, and almost eat it; and I can't."

The strain had been so great, that here Robert broke down; bursting into tears and sobbing bit-

terly. When he could control himself, his first words were :

"Aunt Rachel, I suppose you think I am an awful wicked boy, to tell my father I won't do anything ; but if you knew how hard I have tried to do better than I used to, I don't believe you would blame me."

"I don't blame you," was replied. "If it is necessary for you to earn money to help support the family, there must be some better place for you to work than in a cigar factory. What wages would you get there?"

"I don't know. I want to learn father's trade, but I want to learn more than he has. If I could work as well as he can, and draft for myself, you see I should have a good deal better chance than he has had. I want to learn more about arithmetic, too, and I want to learn to keep books, besides lots of other things."

"You ought to go to school. That is what all of you boys ought to do."

"Yes, ma'am ; but we haven't had decent clothes. Mary has washed and mended for us, and father bought me and Will new suits, day before yesterday. That is why we look so much better than Clem and Luke. It is a shame ; and I wish there never could be any more beer and tobacco in the whole world. That is what father spends his money for, instead of for what he ought to. There, I didn't mean to say it, but I can't take it back, and every word of it is true."

"I am glad you are on the right side of the ques-

tion," said Mrs. Stearns, thus breaking the awkward silence after Robert's outburst.

"I am, and so is Mary; and we are trying to bring the boys around."

"I hope you will succeed, and of course your mother will help you."

"I can't help much about anything," responded Mrs. Winter. "I wish things were different, but I can't change them."

"It is hard for you, sister, I know, but I can not think of any situation I could be in, where I shouldn't keep trying to right what was wrong, and make the most of all I had."

"I never was like you, Rachel."

"It is not necessary you should be. But I have come to stay with you two weeks, and in that time I want to help every one of you all I can. You would have better health if you lived in brighter, sunnier rooms, and went out of doors every day. I am not sure but the best thing you can do is to go home with me and spend the summer."

"I wish I could go," cried Robert.

"What could Mary do without you?"

"She might go too."

"Not to leave your father. I don't see yet how we are to bring things around, but there will be a way. There always is, when it is really best there should be."

"That is what Mrs. Landaff says, Aunt Rachel. Next to you, I guess she is the best woman in the world. She is the one who told Mary about marketing, and sent her the little table. She comes in al-

most every day, too, to bring mother something nice to eat. Her son Ernest is splendid, and I want to be like him."

Will and Clem and Luke did not talk much in the presence of their aunt, but they were interested listeners to all that she said ; and before she had been with them twenty-four hours, they were ready to indorse her opinions and decisions.

"Except what she says about beer and tobacco," whispered Luke, who was not yet nine years old. "I don't believe a woman knows as well about them as boys and men do."

"You don't, do you?" rejoined Robert, who had heard the remarks not intended for his ears. "Aunt Rachel knows more than a thousand boys like you, and the best thing you can do is to do as she tells you."

CHAPTER VII.

BLUNT'S SALOON.

MARY and Robert Winter intended to keep their brothers under strict supervision, but in some way Clem made his escape, and after a short absence, returned in a state of great excitement. Beckoning to Robert to come into the shed, he whispered :

"Father is getting drunk in Blunt's saloon. There are ever so many men there, drinking whisky, and there's another man there talking to them, with a big gold chain, and a big ring on one of his fingers. I heard him tell them it would take something stronger than beer to carry them through the strike. He ordered the whisky, and I saw him wink at Blunt, when he said: 'Give them some of the best.' You've got to do something about it, right off," added Clem, wondering at his brother's silence.

"I was thinking," replied Robert. "I don't know what to do."

"Then ask Aunt Rachel. She knows everything."

"Worse and worse," sighed Mrs. Stearns, when the story was told to her.

She, too, was forced to say that she did not know what to do.

"I believe it would kill me, to see my father drunk," said Mary. "If it comes to that, I shall give up entirely. It won't do any good for me to

work, when there is a drunken man coming home at night, and I can't do it."

"Robert, will you go to walk with me?" asked Aunt Rachel quickly.

"Yes, ma'am, and be glad to," he answered.

"Then we will go in the direction of Blunt's saloon."

"Yes, ma'am"; and the boy's heart beat quick and fast at the thought that his father would be found there.

It was not far. They soon passed it; then re-passed it; Mrs. Stearns looking resolutely at the door and window, but never once raising her eyes to the sign.

"I saw your father in that store, and I think I will go in, too," she said, as the door was opened, revealing a group of men, among whom was he of whom she was in search. Robert was about to remonstrate, when she gave him a warning glance, and entered the saloon.

"Perhaps this is not a proper place for ladies, but as I was out walking, I thought I would join my brother," she remarked to the proprietor, who advanced to meet her.

By this time the man who was haranguing the crowd became aware of her presence, and changing his tone, began a plea for the wives and children of working-men.

"They should be cared for; tenderly cared for," he exclaimed. "A man's first duty is to his family, who should be dearer to him than his life. Every true man is ready to make any sacrifice for wife and

children. It is for them he works, and of them he thinks through the long and often weary days."

While this was said, Mr. Winter would take a step toward his sister and then stop, as if undecided what to do; repeating the movement, and yet but slightly changing his position. On the contrary, Mrs. Stearns stood motionless, with her eyes fixed upon the flashily dressed orator, as though unconscious of another's presence.

"I am sure the lady who has honored us will agree with me," he said at length, bowing low to her.

"I do agree with you in thinking that a man's first duty is to his family," she replied in a clear, distinct voice which could be heard by every one in the room. "He should forego all selfish indulgences, and find his happiness with his wife and children; who should be as devoted to him as he is to them. He should spend his money for their comfort, instead of tobacco and liquor, as so many do." Here she paused, looking deliberately around, after which she spoke hurriedly: "I think this must be a drinking-saloon, and it is no place for me."

Had a thunderbolt fallen at her brother's feet, he would have been no more astonished. He knew not what to do. He had committed himself to a course of action his judgment condemned; and despite the effect of the whisky he had drank, he knew the talk to which he had listened, and which he had applauded, was the sheerest of nonsense. The speaker had his own ends to gain, and these accomplished, he cared no more for working-men than for the stones which paved the street.

Mr. Winter was the best workman in the shop where he was employed ; and until recently, the nicest jobs had been intrusted to him. But his habits were against him, and only that morning the foreman had remonstrated with him ; urging him to give up both beer and tobacco. At the time it was a grim satisfaction to think of the strike that was imminent, and which occurred without warning, at a signal given by one who had no personal interest in any one concerned.

Now what was to be done. He could ask himself this question, but he could not answer it; especially, since his sister had appeared upon the scene of action.

"Give me some more whisky," said the man standing beside him. "It will take another glass to brace me up to meet my wife and sick girl. I promised them a treat this evening, but here it goes down my throat."

The laugh which followed this poor attempt at wit grated harshly on Mr. Winter's ears. He was not yet so far gone that he could make the claims of his family a subject of ridicule ; and disgusted with his surroundings, he turned his steps homeward.

"Well," he said to his sister, who confronted him with a sad, stern face.

"It is anything but well," she replied. "Brother Robert, I would not have believed that I should live to be glad that our mother is dead; but I am glad now. Yes, Robert, I am thankful she did not live to see what I have seen to-day. It would have

broken her heart, to know what I know; that you are almost, if not quite, a drunkard."

"Don't talk so, Rachel, don't. I loved mother as well as you did."

"Then why do you disgrace her after she is dead? How could you go to such a place as where I saw you this morning! The men, there, were strikers, were they not?"

"Yes, they quit work, because their wages were cut down."

"And you"——

"Well, I quit with the rest."

"Oh, Robert, how could you do it, with your family living in this unwholesome place, when you ought to give them a comfortable home! If you earn nothing, how do you expect to live at all? Your Robert says you wanted him to go into a cigar factory to work. How much would he earn there?"

"He would make pretty good wages, after he got well learned. He is quick and handy."

"And you thought making cigars, that never ought to be made at all, was the best use you could put him to. Brother, it seems to me you must have lost your senses. It is dreadful for me to talk so to you, when we have been separated from each other so long; but what can I do? What ought I to do? Ought I to see you go down to perdition, and drag your family down, without speaking a word to restrain you? Brother, have you forgotten the lessons your mother taught you from the Bible, and the prayers she offered for you?"

Great drops of perspiration stood on the forehead of the man to whom these appeals were made, yet he remained silent. But his sister continued, until he cried at last :

“What would you have me do? I am no worse than thousands of others. I have not committed the unpardonable sin, that I should be considered an outcast.”

“God grant that you have not. I can not believe that you have, and for that reason I can pray for you. But tell me about your work and wages, so that I can understand better how you are situated.”

Mr. Winter did this, making his usual complaint that it was all he could do to bring the months around without running into debt.

“If you will give me one-half of what your wages would be, even after ten per cent. reduction, I will engage to provide comfortably for your family,” responded Mrs. Stearns. “I will hire a better tenement, and in six months I will have it better furnished. Your children shall be well clothed, and the boys shall be kept in school. Give your family half the loaf, Robert, and see how they will thrive on it. You ought to be able to meet your own personal expenses with what will provide for six, and give you a good home with them.”

CHAPTER VIII.

ON A STRIKE.

MRS. STEARNS decided to say no more to her brother in regard to his habits until further developments. As a last resort, she appealed to his wife, whom she urged by every possible consideration to come to the rescue.

"If I thought it would be of any use, I would try," replied Mrs. Winter. "I don't know but the fault is partly mine. I never was much of a house-keeper. After the first month or two, I never could quite suit my husband; and a woman don't like to be told she can't do as well as others, even if she knows it. I am glad you had Mary with you so long. She is a great deal more capable than she would have been if she had stayed with me."

"I think she does as well as you could expect such a girl to do, but it is natural for her to want you to take the lead in managing the house."

"I know it, Rachel. I can look back and see a good many times when I might have done better than I did. You don't know, but after Luke was born, I was so tired, all the time, that a neighbor told me to drink beer, and I got so used to it, that when I don't have it, I miss it. I don't feel as though I could get along without it, but my husband says I never shall have any more."

"I don't believe you really want any more, sister, when you think what miserable stuff it is. You can have something better."

"I should like something better. I don't want to make my family unhappy."

"I know you don't. You want to make them as happy as you can. Now, I have planned some work for to-day, and you can help about it if you will. I found a suit of brother Robert's clothes that can be made over for Clem or Luke, whichever needs them most. The best place for cutting them is in Mary's room. The sun shines in there, so it is warm and pleasant, and you can lie down, if you get tired."

Mrs. Winter was finally persuaded to go to Mary's room, where, after talking for an hour or two with her sister-in-law, who managed to inspire her with something like hopefulness, she lay down and fell asleep ; sleeping so soundly that she was not called to dinner.

There was plenty of well-cooked food, which the younger members of the family ate with a keen relish, but their sister was too much depressed to care for food. Their father drank his coffee in silence ; then went out, and after looking up and down the street for a few minutes, came back to the house.

"Rachel, I have been thinking of what you said to me this morning," he remarked, when left alone with his sister. "You were pretty hard on me, though I don't bear you any ill-will. I wish I was different. I wish everything was different. I made

a mistake in the beginning, but I don't want you to think, because you saw me in a whisky-saloon this morning that I am a regular whisky-drinker. I only take a glass occasionally."

"You drink beer every day, don't you?"

"Yes, I do. I won't deny that, and I am so dependent on it, that it would be hard work to get along without it."

"Try and see. Eat three good, square meals every day, with plenty of strong coffee for drink, and at the end of six months you will wonder you ever spent your money for such a vile decoction as beer. But now that you have quit work, what are you going to do for money?"

"There is more than one shop in the city where I can work."

"Can you do better than where you have been?"

"No, I don't suppose I can."

"Then go back to the old place."

"That would be too humiliating."

"It will come to that in the end, Robert. I have read of strikes, and the loss falls heaviest on the strikers. Would it be any more humiliating to go back, than to see your family suffering for the necessities of life? How much money have you to carry you over?"

"What I have earned this week, and there is help to come from the Union."

"Don't fold your hands and accept charity, when you ought to be earning good wages. When is your rent due?"

"Next week."

"That must be paid anyway."

"Yes, landlords have a sharp lookout for their tenants. I am paying more rent than I ought to, but this was the only place I could find when I moved here."

"Have you rented this place for any definite time?"

"No, I am a tenant at will, free to go when I please."

Mr. Winter did not intend to be so communicative in regard to his business, but during a half hour's conversation with his sister, she made herself quite thoroughly acquainted with the true condition of affairs.

Here was a first-class workman who had earned good wages for twenty years, without laying by a single dollar. He had a family to support and children to educate, but he had spent comparatively little for them. He married a young, pretty girl, who had found life with him entirely different from what she had expected. He had disappointed her, and her children had wearied her.

She had little energy and less of thrift, but she could and did appreciate the efforts made in her behalf. Many hands had been busily at work through the morning in improving her room. A broken shutter had been thrown wide open, and a pile of old lumber which obstructed the sunlight, had been removed. A picture hung over the old chest of drawers, and a clean white curtain was looped back with a bit of bright ribbon.

From the first, Mary had intended to take her aunt

to call on Mrs. Landaff, but there was so much needing to be done at home, that after introducing them to each other, she left them to make their own acquaintance. The visitor felt at once that she had found a friend, and the two were soon discussing ways and means for effecting a change in Mr. Winter's household.

"My son has the letting of some houses, and there is a good tenement to be vacated next Monday," said Mrs. Landaff. "The rent is only a dollar a month more than your brother is paying, and there are two more rooms, with the sun shining into every one of them. If you could manage it, they would all feel better in a new place. There will be white-washing all through, and the front room to be painted and papered, but the paper and paint can be put on after they move. We might go and look at the tenement."

This they did, and it was in every way so much more desirable than the one now occupied by her brother's family, that Mrs. Stearns determined the change should be made. Naturally, the strike was considered, when Mrs. Landaff remarked :

"There is a waste of time and money, as long as a man is idle, and besides, idle men are hard to influence for good. It will cost your brother something to go back to his work now, but it will be easier for him than three months from now."

CHAPTER IX

HALF THE LOAF.

THE foreman of the shop in which Mr. Winter had been employed received a call from Mrs. Landaff, who was a friend of his mother.

"I wish you had asked almost anything else of me," he said, after listening to her request. "We make it a point never to urge the return of a man who leaves us because of dissatisfaction with his wages. Of course, we should offer no extra inducements. It was only after long and serious debate, that the company decided to make the reduction of which the men complain, and having made it, they will abide by it. Winter was the best man we have ever had until he became such a confirmed beer-drinker. Since then he has not been so reliable."

"But wouldn't you be willing to give him another chance, if he would give up drinking beer?"

"Certainly ; we should be glad to have him come back to-morrow morning, but he better throw away his pipe with his beer-mug."

"Well, Harold, would you mind going to him yourself to-morrow morning, and tell him what you have just told me? You might be doing the best deed of all your life. It is the man's soul I am pleading for, and the souls of his family. Remember that, Harold ; and remember, too, that in the day

of judgment, his soul may be required at your hands."

"Mrs. Landaff, you have gained your point, as usual. I will see Winter in the morning, and after what you have said, you can trust me to do my best to influence him."

True to his word, Harold Sutton appeared at the door of the poor home which beer had cursed, and presently Will Winter whispered to his aunt :

"The boss of the shop has come for father to go to work again. The others will be awful mad if he does, but I wouldn't mind anything about that, would you?"

"No, I shouldn't," was replied, and then Will hastened back to his post of observation, from which he could see if not hear.

The interview was prolonged. There was evidently a reluctance on Mr. Winter's part to accept the conditions offered. When he came in he made no allusion to what had occurred, but after eating his breakfast, he said abruptly :

"The strike is ended as far as I am concerned. I am going to the shop ; and, Mary, there is a dollar for dinner."

He waited for no reply to this announcement. At noon no one asked him any questions, but Robert, who had watched him closely while on the street, was positive that he did not visit any saloon, although repeatedly asked to join an old comrade in drinking.

"I tell you, wouldn't it be a big thing for us if father should give up beer and tobacco?" exclaimed

the boy. "He hasn't smoked a whiff to-day ; I know he hasn't. He couldn't smoke in the shop and I have watched him the rest of the time."

In the evening Mr. Winter had another interview with his sister, who, to use her own words, worked and prayed hard all day.

"I have lived through one twenty-four hours without beer or tobacco; but whether I can keep it up is more than I know," he said seriously. "But there is one thing certain. Tobacco must go first. I can never endure the tobacco thirst without beer. There was not another man in the shop to-day, except Sutton, and there is a drive of work. If I was as I used to be, ten years ago, I could earn two dollars more before going to bed, but I can't trust myself now. The half loaf would be larger if I could."

"It would be large enough as it is, if your family could only be sure of it."

"They shall have it. I can promise that, whatever happens. They shall have half I earn, whether much or little."

"And the other half, brother?"

"I can not promise about that."

He was up early, the next morning, but Mrs. Stearns was early as he; so that, if he intended going to the saloon, he had no opportunity. After breakfast she walked with him to the shop, thus preventing all annoyance from disaffected workmen.

Mrs. Winter made a great gain that day. She was interested in what was going on around her,

and even talked of what she could do for her family if she had money at her disposal.

"Mother used to say I had a knack for cutting and fitting, and making old things over; but it is so long since I tried, I had almost forgotten about it. I think I could make you a real pretty apron, Mary."

"I wish you would," Mary replied, delighted at the change in her mother. "I have some money left from my marketing; enough to buy the material for an apron, and you and Aunt Rachel can go and buy it."

"Yes, and while we are out we will call on Mrs. Landaff," said Aunt Rachel. "I know she will be glad to see us."

Of course Mrs. Winter made many objections to going out, but these were overruled. She was sensitive in regard to her personal appearance, and this was considered a sure sign of improvement. The shopping was accomplished, the call made, and the tenement, soon to be vacated, examined. Mrs. Stearns was rejoiced that the tenement was approved.

"It seems as though, if we could move in here, we could start new again," said her companion. "It would be the making of the boys, and Mary could have such a pleasant room, it wouldn't be so hard for her to live with us."

There were better days in store for the family which had fallen so low. Mr. Winter had not been consulted in regard to moving; but there was no doubt that he would acquiesce in the plan.

Thus far he had been unmolested, but there were

two parties who felt themselves aggrieved by his defection: the saloon-keepers, and the striking workmen. They proposed to bring him back into the ranks; by *fair* means, if these proved effective; by *foul* means, if these failed.

On his way home, the second evening after returning to his work, he encountered several of his old comrades, who insisted that he should go with them through the street he wished most to avoid. When opposite the beer-saloon, which had been his favorite resort, they attempted to force him to enter; which so aroused his anger, that he tore himself away, and hurrying through a back alley, hoped thus to elude them. But in this he was mistaken. They met him again near Blunt's whisky-saloon, and made another push to overpower him.

"Come in and have a social time with your old friends," said the smiling proprietor, throwing the door wide open.

"Never, so help me God!" cried the now furious man. "I am not to be driven by a hundred of you. I will never enter this saloon alive. Things have come to a strange pass, when a man is to be driven into a trap like a wild beast. Hands off. Go where you will, but don't try to drive me."

By this time a policeman interfered, and Mr. Winter was allowed to go his way without further molestation.

"The men were half drunk," he said when describing the encounter. "They have been drinking hard since they quit work, and nobody knows where they will stop."

"Where will *you* stop?" asked Luke, by no means realizing the full import of his question.

"Stop!" repeated the father. "Where will I stop? I *have* stopped. I have smoked my last whiff of tobacco, and drank my last glass of beer or whisky."

"Good for you, father," exclaimed Luke. "I will swear off with you, and we will see what we can do."

"So will I," rejoined Clem.

"And I too," added Will.

"As for me, I swore off more than a year ago," said Robert.

"Thank God," said Mrs. Stearns reverently. "Let us thank Him on our knees."

CHAPTER X.

AN ERRAND OF MERCY.

How Mr. Winter lived through the next two weeks he hardly knew. There were times when it seemed to him that the craving for his old stimulants would drive him insane. He counted every hour of the day as bringing him nearer to the night, and every hour of the night, as bringing him nearer to another day. He was insensible to the jeers and ridicule heaped upon him, because of the mental and physical torture he endured in the conflict with himself.

His family had moved from the old, dismal tenement into one made bright and cheerful with the sunlight which flooded the rooms. His wages, paid each Saturday night, had been divided, as promised, and one-half placed at the disposal of his wife and daughter. He was ready to give the whole, but this was not allowed.

"Half a loaf, and only half," said Mary, who was held responsible for the marketing. "That was the agreement, and we will abide by it."

"But I can never spend so much on myself," he replied. "It is not much I need besides what I share with the rest of you. I shall soon have a large surplus."

"Which you can invest for your own benefit, father, in the way that will do you most good."

His sister said to him much the same ; and as for his wife, she was in a state of constant surprise. She was surprised at the change in her husband ; surprised that so much of comfort could be purchased for so small an amount of money ; and most of all, she was surprised at what she was, herself, able to accomplish.

She caught the spirit of activity from her family ; and worked, sometimes, quite beyond her strength. She had forsworn beer ; taking in its stead a simple tonic prepared by her sister-in-law.

There was economical planning to save in one place, that more might be spent in another ; yet three good substantial meals were placed upon the neatly laid table every day. There was strong coffee for the father, tea for the mother, and plenty of rich milk for all who chose to drink it.

Thanks to Aunt Rachel's energy and industry, the boys were made ready for school. The two weeks of her proposed visit had lengthened into three, and the time for her return could be no longer delayed. Mary was almost disheartened at the thought of being left, but she was encouraged to hope for the best.

"You will have six to help you," said Mrs. Stearns, as they talked of the future. "It will be better for you all to depend upon yourselves. Your father is having a hard battle, but I believe he will conquer. You must persuade him to attend church with you. There was a time when it seemed to me he was almost persuaded to be a Christian ; and now, if ever, he needs the safeguard of religion. I am thankful

the boys are fairly enlisted for the Sunday-school, but you must remember that they will need constant encouragement. I shall go home, feeling that you are all doing well."

"O, Aunt Rachel, I wish I could go with you. It tires me to think of what is before me. I feel so old too. It seems as though I had lived a great many years since I came here, and now, if things go wrong after you leave us, I shall think the fault is mine."

No wonder that this young girl shrank from the responsibilities which had been thrown upon her. The work had been well begun; but to effect its purpose, it must continue. While there was no lack of money for comfortable living, there was sometimes lack of strength to make it most available.

Mrs. Landaff's friendship never failed them; and now that they lived in an adjoining house, they consulted her on all occasions. Ernest Landaff exerted a strong influence over the boys of the family, who regarded him with profound admiration. Like his mother, he delighted in being of service to others, and was quick to see where this could be done.

"There is trouble in store for the men who struck with Mr. Winter," he said, one evening, when he came in from his work. "They have been idle two months, and the result has not been what they expected. They have neglected their families, and spent more than half their time in drinking-saloons or places no better. The Union has notified them that, after this week, they must expect no more assistance. Of course the saloon-keepers will not

trust them unless there is a prospect of being paid."

"All the better for the men," replied Mrs. Landaff.

"I know it is, and I wish they would see it so. Three-quarters of the money given by the Union has been spent for beer, whisky, and tobacco. I suppose that seems a large estimate to you, mother, but when a man accustomed to their use has no employment, he drinks and smokes, almost as a necessity, to kill time, which hangs heavy on his hands. One of the strikers has a sick daughter, about twelve years old, who is really suffering for the want of proper food. One of the shop hands told me about her to-day, and I thought you and Mary Winter better go and see her."

"Why not go this evening, Ernest? If the child needs help, the sooner she has it, the better. A great deal may happen before to-morrow."

When a good deed was to be done, Mrs. Landaff was not one to delay its performance. So she, with her son, called at Mr. Winter's, where the story was told.

"Ray has been just wild ever since he left the shop," said Mr. Winter. "I have seen him nearly every day, and I have never seen him when he was quite sober. I think he has given up drinking beer, and taken to whisky. I am sorry for Alice and her mother. Ray isn't a bad-hearted fellow, but men who do as he is doing forget their families at home."

"Why don't you carry something real good to the sick girl?" now asked Clem. "And you might talk to the man, too, father. You ought to know how," added the boy.

It was the first time Mr. Winter had thought of working to reform others; but after a little consideration, he decided to accompany Mrs. Landaff and his daughter on their errand of mercy.

"We have come to see your sick girl," responded the elder woman, when they were invited to enter the plain room, which contained not a single unnecessary article of furniture.

"I have hardly a chair to offer you, but any one who comes to see my Alice is welcome," replied the mother.

Mr. Winter said nothing; but he carried a basket, from which he took several packages, each containing some delicacy to tempt the appetite of an invalid. Mary was obliged to speak for him, which she did in the kindest possible manner.

"I can never thank you enough," exclaimed Mrs. Ray, with tears in her eyes. "Alice has had nothing to-day but corn-meal gruel. I thought the Lord had quite forgotten us. I could bear it for myself, but Alice could hardly swallow the gruel."

"Where is your husband?" asked Mrs. Landaff.

"I have not seen him since morning," answered Mrs. Ray. "I don't know where he is, but likely he is somewhere where there is liquor. Alice don't like to have me say it, but what else can I say? Curse the beer and whisky, and—— But I won't curse the men who sell it. They will have enough to suffer, without my curses."

CHAPTER XI.

SOMETHING TO DRINK.

MR. WINTER stayed to hear no more. Every word condemned his own past life. He, too, had forgotten promises, ignored responsibilities, and neglected his most sacred duties. He was scarcely less guilty than his old comrade, Ray, who had left wife and child to depend upon others. He rushed from the room, without speaking to the sick girl, sympathy for whom had brought him there.

Mrs. Landaff and Mary remained; the latter soon making the acquaintance of Alice Ray, and receiving the heartiest thanks for unexpected kindness. The child had been so tired and so anxious, waiting for the return of her father, who promised to be home early.

"I always think he means to come, no matter how many times he doesn't come," she said with a sigh. "He would be good, if it wasn't for the bad drink. I know your father is good, or he wouldn't have brought me so many good things. Couldn't he talk to my father, and tell him how much better he could be? You ask him to, won't you?"

"Yes," answered Mary, wondering how she should make the request.

Meanwhile as Mr. Winter was walking rapidly

down the street, he met Mr. Ray, to whom he said cordially :

“Good - evening. I am glad to see you. Come home with me, and let us have a talk together.”

“Will you give me something to drink? I couldn't think of talking when I am so dry,” was replied.

“I will give you something to drink and something to eat. So come right along with me.”

Evidently, Ray was out of funds, or he would not have been on the street at that time in the evening. He was in a reckless mood, and went with Mr. Winter, because anything was preferable to going home. He had gambled away what little money he had in the morning, and knew not where he was to get more.

“Do you live here?” he asked, as his companion stopped before a respectable-looking house. “I thought you lived further down. I don't see how you can afford to pay rent in such a house as this.”

“Come in, and I will tell you all about it, besides a good many other things, it will do you good to know,” was replied.

The front room, which the boys had already learned to call the parlor, contained but few articles of furniture; yet, as the evening was warm, Mr. Winter invited his guest to a seat in this room. Then he went to the kitchen, and asked his wife to make some strong coffee, and send it in by Robert, with sugar and milk, and whatever else would suit the appetite of a tired, discouraged man.

Ernest Landaff, who was giving the boys a lesson in simple mechanics, begged the privilege of pre

paring the coffee, which he was allowed to do, and also to arrange the tray Robert carried to his father.

"Coffee!" muttered Ray, beginning to suspect his host of some concealed purpose in bringing him there. "Did you invite me to come home with you for the sake of drinking a cup of coffee?"

"Yes, for that, and the talk we are going to have," was replied frankly. "It is what I drink, and it does me good. It will do you good too. Put in plenty of sugar and milk, and then take a sandwich for a relish. After that, you can try some of my wife's gingerbread. Coffee is a good deal better for us both than beer, and this is a better place than a beer-saloon for us to spend our evenings in."

Mr. Ray was entirely at fault. He knew not what to say, but he was thirsty, and the coffee was good. So he drank; and after some urging, he proceeded to eat; declaring, as he did so, that he had never relished any food so much. Then he drank more coffee, and gradually his reserve gave way.

"Is the shop full?" he asked somewhat hesitatingly.

"Your place is not permanently filled," answered Mr. Winter. "There is a chance for you to come back, if you come soon, and accept the conditions."

"What are the conditions?"

"The company have posted a notice that no man will be employed by them who drinks beer or any other kind of liquor."

"Then I shall never do another stroke of work for them. It is none of their business what I drink. I am a free man, not a slave to them or any one else.

I shall do as I please. You may drink slops as long as you want to, but I am bound to have something stronger."

In his excitement the speaker would have rushed from the room, but his host detained him, saying in an earnest tone :

"Ray, I know as well as you do that the Union has shut down on you, and you must go to work, or starve, or beg. You and I have drank together, and spent our money, when our families ought to have had it. A large part of what I earned went for beer and tobacco, and sometimes for whisky ; but I never calculated exactly how much, until I quit the whole thing. We are living now on half of my wages, and we live well enough. Perhaps you have given your wife more money for her house-keeping than I gave mine, though she wouldn't need so much. There are seven of us, and only three of you. I have five children, and you but one."

"Only one, and she, poor thing, is sick. That makes me think. I promised to carry her something good to eat, to-day, but when I got with the men, I forgot her. I don't know what she will do. There wasn't much for her or her mother, and I haven't a cent left to buy anything for them."

"They have all they need for to-night and to-morrow."

"How do you know? Has any one told you? Have you seen them?"

"Yes, I was coming from your room when I met you. I carried them enough, so they will be comfortable for a day or two. We heard how badly off they were, and went to help them."

"Don't tell me my wife and child are objects of charity. Don't tell me that my Alice and her mother are beggars."

"They did not beg. One of our neighbors told us that your sick girl needed different food from what she had ; so I spent a dollar or two for her. And, Ray, I don't think I went there any too soon. My daughter is there now, and if anybody can do your Alice good, she can."

"Mercy ! what have I come to !" exclaimed Ray. "Winter, tell me what to do. I believe I have quite lost my head. My rent is due to-morrow, and my pockets are empty. I have given Blunt an order on my week's allowance from the Union, and there is no more to come. What shall I do? For pity's sake tell me."

"Do as I did. Swear off from beer, tobacco, and whisky, and go back to work."

"But I can't ask Sutton to take me back ; and besides, Winter, I don't believe I could live on the cold-water plan."

"Live on the coffee plan, as I do. You would have a rough fight, but you have only to keep steady at it, and you will come out ahead. Do it for the sake of your wife and your Alice, if not for yourself. Go to Sutton to-night, and ask him to let you take your old place to-morrow. He will make it a condition that you stop drinking, but you ought to do that anyway."

"How about tobacco ?"

"He will leave that to yourself. But I tell you that tobacco must go with the beer, or you will be

crazy with thirst. Come, Ray, I will go to Sutton with you."

"I can't. I never can come down to that. I would rather try my luck somewhere else."

"You can do better in the old place than anywhere else. You have nothing to live on, either, while you are hunting up another place. Be a man, Ray, and build yourself up where you have let yourself down. The men working at our trade, even with the cut-down, can make good wages. You know that as well as I do ; and if we are poor, after working as many years as we have, it is our own fault."

CHAPTER XII.

A HELPING HAND.

IN her second appeal to Harold Sutton, Mrs. Landaff was too late. Mr. Winter had been there before her, and with him was Mr. Ray, who had hardly recovered from what was little better than a long debauch. He could not speak for himself, but he endorsed all that was said in his behalf, and promised to abstain from the use of all intoxicating drinks. "If I go to drinking again, you will never see me afterward," he said, with an emphasis which gave to his words a fearful meaning. "I will never ask you to give me a second trial."

"I trust there will be no need of that," replied Mr. Sutton. "Your friend, here, is to be surety for your good conduct, and I shall be glad to have you back at work. If I was in the habit of speaking in public, I should certainly come out as a temperance lecturer. The money of too many men goes into the till of the saloon-keeper, instead of being spent for their families."

"Why, my friends, if I had drank beer, or whisky, or even used tobacco, I don't know but my mother's family would have been in the poorhouse. My father died when I was fourteen years old, and there were five children younger. When the expenses of

my father's sickness and burial were paid, my mother had left only ten dollars, with enough of plain furniture for plain housekeeping.

"It was not my father's fault that he was poor in this world's goods, but it was a blessing to us that he was rich in a consistent religious character. He looked far into the future for his children; and seeing the danger to which they would be exposed, warned us to avoid it. He called us around his death-bed, and there exacted from us a promise never to touch the cursed drink. We have all kept the promise, and to this day I do not know the taste of any intoxicating liquor."

"I wish I could say that," responded Ray earnestly. "I began with beer when I was a boy, and here I am, so poor that my wife and my Alice must be fed by my neighbors."

"Feed some other man's wife and child, and so pay the debt," was replied. "There is only a step between poverty and independence. When you have made those dependent upon you comfortable, and you are comfortable with them, it needs only a few dollars in your pocket to make you as rich as your neighbor. Ask Winter about it. He says his family are living on half a loaf; half of his wages."

"I don't see how he can do it," said Ray.

"I do, because I know, by experience, how much of real, solid comfort can be bought with comparatively little money. I didn't tell you that, with what we children could earn, and our mother's economy, we kept together and had a respectable home, with enough to eat and drink. We were clothed, too, so

that we went to church every Sunday; and, my friends, there were months and months when we had no more than a dollar a day to meet all our expenses. Mother did the planning, and made the most of what we had. It was close work, but we came out all right. How do you think it would have been if my brothers and myself had taken to beer and tobacco?"

"You would have been as poor as I am," answered Ray; adding: "I thank you, Mr. Sutton, for giving us this bit of your experience. I didn't know you had been down on a level with us."

"Bless you, friend, I began at the foot of the ladder, and worked my way up. I worked hard too. There is not a man in the shop who has worked harder than I have, and I must keep on working."

It may be that Harold Sutton was moved to speak thus frankly by a remark of his old friend, Mrs. Landaff, who said to him: "Remember the way you have come, and have a kind word and a helping hand for others who are climbing the hill."

Nothing else could so have touched the heart of Mr. Ray; and when he went home, late that evening, he was like a child trying to walk in a new path.

"O father, I spread the table for you long ago," cried Alice, reaching out her hands toward him. "A good man came and brought me ever so many things. There was a nice old lady with him, too, and a girl, just four years older than I am. The man didn't stay long, but I had a real nice time with the girl, and she promised to come again. I

told mother I wanted to set the table for you, and she bolstered me up in a chair, so I could."

Alice was so eager to recount the events of the evening, that she gave her father no opportunity to speak, until she had quite exhausted her strength. Then she looked at him more closely, and quick to see the change in his appearance, asked :

"What is the matter, father? Are you sick?"

"No," he replied, and then, turning to his wife, said : "I am going back to work in the morning, and when I come home at night, I will bring you every cent I earn. There will be only a day's wages, but that will be more than you have had this long time."

"What do you mean?" asked Mrs. Ray, coming close to her husband, and looking him steadily in the face.

"I mean—I mean—that I am going to be different. I have had supper at Winter's, and he went with me to see Sutton, and"— Here he broke down and could say no more. He, with his wife, knelt by their daughter's couch, where they all wept; scarce knowing why, and yet unable to restrain their tears. It was nearly morning before he slept, yet he was in season for his work; and true to his word, he carried his day's wages home and placed the amount in his wife's hands.

With this she was able to provide better food than usual for the Sabbath. Alice, too, had her share, in addition to what Mr. Winter had brought to her.

Ernest Landaff carried in some papers for Sunday reading; yet with all the home attractions, Mr. Ray

was restless and impatient. At evening, when Mr Winter called to invite him to attend a service in a chapel near by, he would have been glad to accept the invitation.

"But I never can be seen with these shabby clothes beside your new suit," he said regretfully. "I am too proud for that, low as I have gone."

His friend did not stop to urge him to change his decision ; but going directly out, soon returned in his working dress, saying :

"Now you have no excuse."

"That is true, Winter, and I thank you for taking it away. I am glad to go with you."

So in one of the back pews of the chapel sat two roughly dressed men, listening as for their lives to the old prophet's invitation : "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

This invitation was repeated over and over. It was enforced by the most tender personal appeals ; every word emphasized, and every motive urged for its acceptance.

When the short sermon was ended, the speaker asked any one present who had not yet drank of the waters of life, but who desired to do so, to manifest this desire by rising.

No sooner was this invitation given, than Mr. Ray sprang to his feet ; forgetting all things else in the one great longing which filled his heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WORKING-MAN.

"ANOTHER temptation, and another unprincipled capitalist to take large slices from the working-man's loaf," remarked one gentleman to another, as they were standing opposite the saloon, the opening of which had so troubled Robert Winter.

"Yes, and the strangest part of it is : the working-man seems not to realize how large a part of his loaf is thus taken away from him," was replied.

"He does not realize it. But now that we are upon the subject, have you ever thought that, with few exceptions, the men of this country are all working-men?"

"I *have* thought of it, and I consider it unfortunate that those who follow certain occupations should be singled out as pre-eminently the working-men. I am not sure but it has something to do with the feeling of antagonism between labor and capital."

"I am quite sure that it has. Those who work under the direction of others are inclined to consider their employers as mere task-masters, wresting from them unrequited labor. For one, I was never so happy as when I worked on a fair, living salary. I knew exactly how much I could spend, and still lay by a little every year. I am richer than I was

then ; but I work harder and have a thousand times more anxiety."

"That is my experience ; and besides being anxious for myself, the older I grow, the more anxious I am for my neighbors. I am both grieved and indignant, when I see so many drinking-saloons opened in all parts of our city, sapping the very life of our community, and bringing poverty to thousands of families."

The gentlemen who had expressed their opinions thus freely, passed on, without observing a bright-eyed boy who, basket in hand, stood where he could hear all they had said. This boy was Luke Winter, always on the lookout for new ideas, as his first question after reaching home proved.

"Mary, what kind of a loaf is the working-man's loaf?" he asked eagerly.

His sister looking up in surprise, and giving him no direct answer, he proceeded to repeat what he had heard.

"I understand it now," she said. "A working-man's loaf is his wages."

"I see, I see," exclaimed Luke. "That is it exactly, and that gentleman told the truth about the saloon-keepers taking big slices. They are just like some boys when they want a bite of an apple. They open their mouth as wide as they can, and take every bit they can get. The man in the new saloon asked me to do a job of work for him this morning, and said he would pay me well for it ; but I told him I wouldn't stay 'round a saloon for a dollar a minute, and I wouldn't ; would you?"

"No; you must keep out of the way of temptation, if you would keep your pledge."

"I mean to. The fellows I used to go with are all down on me, but I don't care for that. I just keep preaching to them; and telling them how much better off they would be, if they would take the same pledge I have. Wasn't it awful, to live as we used to?"

"It was awful to me."

"It would have been to me, if I had known enough. I see now all about our half loaf, as Aunt Rachel called it. It means half of father's wages, and it is a pretty big piece, when he earns as much as he did last week. I should think we might almost have a carpet for the parlor."

"We can, almost, but not quite."

"O Mary, what does genius mean? Ernest Landaff says Robert is a genius, and I want to know what that means. There are so many things I want to know, I am afraid I never shall find them all out. I think of more things all the time. I waked up in the night, and I wanted to go into your room and ask you lots of questions; but I went off to sleep, and this morning something else crowded them out of my mind."

A "sharp boy" was Luke Winter, as everybody who knew him said, and as his father had frequent occasion to remember. The idea of the working-man's loaf had taken full possession of him. He never saw a man going into a drinking-saloon, without calculating how large a slice would be left on the counter.

"That is what is the matter with so many women and children who don't have enough to eat," he said, one day, to his father. "I tell you, I don't mean to make bread for saloon-keepers to gobble up."

When talking with Mr. Ray upon this subject, Mr. Winter expressed the same opinion; his companion replying:

"If men realized they were spending more money for liquor and tobacco than for their families, I believe they would stop. The truth is, Winter, I never stopped to think anything about it. I earned my money, and when I had it in my pocket, I spent it for what I wanted first. If anybody had told me then that I was a fool, I should have resented it, but they would have told the truth."

"I was a fool, too, Ray, but I can not say that I never thought how much money I was spending. I did think, and it made me cross; but I had such a craving for beer and tobacco, that I didn't care for anything else. I don't know where I should be, by this time, if I had kept on. Mr. Sutton thinks it a moderate estimate, that one-quarter of all the money paid to mechanics and common laborers, in this city, is spent for what really injures them. I should set it higher than that. In the last two years I have not averaged to spend as much as a quarter of my wages for my family."

"Neither have I, and all the time my poor sick girl has been pining for the want of what I would not give her. May God forgive me, and help me to do better in future. You have five children and I have only Alice. I shall do all I can for her."

"And I shall do all I can for my five."

"You ought to, Winter. Robert can fill your place at the lathe, and more too, if you give him a chance."

"He shall have a chance, and so shall the rest of my children. My wife and I begin to talk of sending Mary to school. We haven't said anything to her about it, but we think we can manage to bring it around."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PRIZE.

It had been Robert Winter's ambition to know as much as Ernest Landaff; but when he took the prize for the best mechanical drawing—a prize for which this friend also competed—he was utterly amazed at his good fortune.

"Why, Mary, it almost takes my breath away, just to think of it," he said to his sister. "I can hardly believe it; and it seems to me now that the prize really belongs to Ernest. Mr. Otterson has always said he was a splendid draughtsman."

"No one doubts that, and Ernest has always said that you are a genius."

"I am what you and he have made me. Think what I was three years ago, when you came home from Uncle Daniel's. Why, Mary, it doesn't seem as though we could live a week as we did then. And look at father. He used to go slouching along through the streets, as if he was ashamed of himself. Now he stands up straight, and puts his feet down fair and square. I am beginning to be proud of him."

"And of mother too?"

"Yes. She has changed as much as father. They have kept right along together. They couldn't help

it, with you doing as much as you have ; and I suppose we must thank Aunt Rachel for that."

"Aunt Rachel will be very glad to hear you have gained the prize."

"So am I glad; but I don't care so much for that, as I do for knowing what I want to. The rest of you are welcome to all the praise, and the hundred dollars besides."

Robert's brothers were very proud of him; glad, too, that he had earned so much money.

"Now we shall be all right for Christmas," said Luke, clapping his hands. "I tell you, I have raked and scraped every cent I could get hold of, but I began to be afraid we boys couldn't do our part. You can give fifty dollars, and have fifty for yourself. Won't Mary be surprised, and won't she begin to think she is getting some of her pay for having such a hard time, when she first came to live with us? I had rather wait for the new house another year, and then have more things to put in it."

This question of waiting longer for a new house had been seriously considered by Mr. Winter; and as he could rent a larger tenement in the neighborhood where he had lived, he decided to do so.

He was earning better wages than ever before; doing the finest work in his line, and counted reliable in all things. His children were in school, making good progress in their studies, and ranking high as scholars. The entire family were constant attendants at church, and Sunday-school; respectable and respected.

Mary had developed a talent for music, and her

brothers, who thought there was never another sister like her, resolved that she should have a piano. For a year they had been planning to accomplish this, and Robert's prize made it sure that it would be purchased as a Christmas present.

Uncle Daniel and Aunt Rachel, and all the cousins, were invited to spend the holidays in the city ; but the young people were otherwise engaged, so that only their parents accepted the invitation. The presence, however, of these two caused a general rejoicing, and they, in turn, rejoiced at the prosperity and happiness they witnessed.

Christmas morning, while Mary Winter was making an early call upon Mrs. Landaff, the new piano was put in place ; and upon her return, Robert attempted a presentation speech. In this, however, he failed ; and Luke came to his assistance, by exclaiming :

"It is yours, and we all helped pay for it. Now I hope you won't be sorry you came to live with us when we didn't live decent."

"Sorry!" repeated Mary, looking around from one to another. "I never can thank you enough for doing so much for me."

She could say no more for the sobs which choked her voice; and of them all, Aunt Rachel was first to regain self-control : singing Coronation, as the most fitting expression of her feelings. Others joined ; and at last, when Mary played the accompaniment, it was like a grand burst of praise from grateful hearts.

Mingled with so much of gratitude for past mer-

cies, there were bright anticipations for the future ; many of which have been realized. Two years of well-remunerated labor on the part of Mr. Winter, with the hearty co-operation of his wife, made it possible for him to build a commodious house, without decreasing the allowance for his children.

Mr. Ray and himself had purchased adjoining lots of land, just beyond the city limits, not long after signing a pledge of total abstinence; paying for them in instalments, and so preparing the way for permanent homes. Their houses stand side by side; their gardens are laid out according to the same plan, and their families are on the most intimate terms.

Mrs. Landaff regretted that they should go so far from her; yet she, too, hopes to have a home near them, when Ernest shall give to her a daughter. Certain it is that Mary Winter will use her influence to accomplish this, and Ernest Landaff is reasonably certain to be governed by her wishes.

It is yet too soon to predict what the future will bring to the boys of Mr. Winter's household, but thus far they give promise of useful and successful lives.

They are still eating from the working-man's loaf; and as Luke says, "a grand, good loaf it is; fresh baked every day, and increased in size, as the appetite of the family demands."

THE END.

DRINKING JACK.

DRINKING JACK.

CHAPTER I.

IF ever dwellers by the sea had reason to thank God for shelter, it was on the evening of the second day of the year 1850. Over thirty years have passed; but the storm which then raged is not forgotten by those of whom I shall write in this story.

It was where a bold, rocky coast, against which the waves beat ceaselessly, walled in the seething waters of the Atlantic. From these very cliffs beacon-lights had gleamed in the olden time, warning the sailor of danger; and during the struggle of our fathers with England, signals had flashed and flamed for distant watches.

But on the night in question, there was neither signal nor beacon-light; no vessels in the offing, and no war in our borders. Darkness brooded over land and sea.

Two miles distant there was a village, whose well-built houses and well-kept streets attested New England thrift and industry. Between this and the shore there were several dwellings, more or less pretentious, according to the means of their owners; while the very furthest from the village, and poorest of all, was the home of John Neal.

Home! It seems a desecration of this word, suggestive as it is of comfort and all kindly affections, to apply it to a place where there are none of these, even though such place holds wife and children.

"Drinking Jack" was the name by which John Neal was known in the community, and this reveals his character. He could work, and *did* work, whenever it suited his pleasure or convenience. If a job requiring both strength and skill was to be done, Jack's services were in requisition, if he could be kept sober.

Yet, a terrible man and a most brutalized sot, he was despised by all, while he was pitied by none. His wife and children received sympathy. But he! Who cared for him? Reform was not to be thought of in his case. His only redeeming quality lay in his ability to labor, and his death would have been counted a blessing.

"If he should lose his way to-night, and fall from the rocks, the world would be rid of one wretch," said a man who saw him leaving a cellar, just at dark. "He don't walk very straight, and this wind may blow some good, after all. I wouldn't undertake to find the old hut to-night."

"A tough storm," said another, in reply. "If it wasn't in a sheltered place, the old hut would blow away before morning, and its owner be none the poorer."

Drinking Jack was a tall, well-built man, whose breadth of chest and strength of muscle were in themselves a promise of long life. Any ordinary constitution would have given way, years before, under the strain to which his had been subjected, although he was scarcely past middle life.

"Going home, Jack?" asked a rough-looking man.

who encountered him just as he was passing the outermost limits of the village.

"Yes," he answered with a fearful oath.

"Better mind your steps, then. Lucky it rains. Cold water may do you good. A dirty storm, though. I'm ready to turn in."

"Turn in, then, out of my way." And an oath added emphasis to the remark.

So long as he followed the road, he found no difficulty, even when the increased fury of the storm caused him to mutter curses between his teeth. About three-quarters of a mile from home, he paused by the last house he would pass, and considered if he should enter. Through the uncurtained window he saw a group gathered around a well-spread table.

Warmth and food within; cold and hunger without. Bad as he was, low as he had fallen, the doors of this house would not be shut upon him. Irresolute, he lingered, until a man's face was turned to the window, when, with a horrid imprecation, he strode on.

A little further, he turned to the right. By this time his clothing was completely soaked, and his boots sodden. The way seemed long, and for a moment he faltered. It must have been instinct which guided his steps until he could see the faint glimmer of a light. Then, sure he should reach home, he took a flask from his pocket and drank deeply. Stumbling over stones and earth, which the rain had loosened, he stood just by the window through which he had seen a light.

Wonder that he should have seen, so faint was it; only the flickering ray of a tallow candle. Not always was there even this; but Mary, the oldest daughter, was

at home, and George had been expected. A better supper than usual was in process of preparation, Mary having brought the materials.

"Good-evening, father!" she said, as he opened the door.

"I don't see anything good about the evening," he answered surlily, throwing his cap upon the floor. "I'm wet to my skin. Start round, and bring me some dry clothes. Stop that brat's noise, or I'll stop it myself," he added, as the baby commenced crying.

Mrs. Neal looked up hopelessly. The child was sick, and its wailing could not be hushed. Mary endeavored to engage her father's attention, in providing for his own comfort. The other children crept noiselessly up the stairs leading to an unfinished chamber, where they huddled together in one corner.

"Oh! I've stepped in the water," whispered one. "I feel it coming down on my neck, too."

"Yes, I guess you can," answered Harry. "This old roof leaks like a sieve. When I'm a man, I won't live in any such old shell as this. I won't drink rum, either. I promised Uncle George I wouldn't."

"Hush!" said Nancy. "Don't talk. I wish George would come. I'm afraid father's going to have one of his spells; and we shall all die if he drives us out in the storm to-night."

"No, we sha'n't either," replied Harry, stoutly. "We shall go right down to Uncle George's house. He said we must, the very next time father shuts us out."

"Could you find the way in the dark?" asked little Nellie.

"Of course I could, if it was dark as pitch."

"Hush!" whispered Nancy, and this time the injunction was heeded.

There was a crash below, and the light no longer shone through the cracks in the floor.

"Father, father!" cried Mary, "you have killed the baby."

Such a wild, maniacal laugh as answered her. It was quite certain that Drinking Jack would "have a spell."

Lying prone upon the floor, regardless of the water above and below him, Harry could see, when the candle was relighted, all which transpired in the kitchen. His father was striding about, with arms swinging, threatening at every step to demolish some article of furniture. His mother had made her escape with the baby.

"Stand out of my way! Stand out of my way!" cried the infuriated man, with an oath, to Mary, who kept guard by the door, through which her mother had passed, in the darkness.

"No, father," she answered firmly. "This room is the place for you."

"But I want that brat, and I'll have it. It's made noise enough for one night, and I'll see if I can't be master in my own house. There! there! See there! The old serpent is after me! See his eyes! He is getting ready for a spring!" And then a howl of mingled rage and terror rang out upon the storm.

Mary understood this. She knew what would follow, and trembled in view of the possible fate of all in the house. There was no help near. George would not come home such a night.

Meanwhile, Harry thought as rapidly as his sister.

He knew that help was needed. Only a little before, he had boasted that he could find the way to his uncle's, and he resolved to make the attempt. Rising from the floor, he whispered his intentions to Nancy, the sister older than himself, who, although she expressed a fear that he would be lost, offered no objections.

"No danger of my getting lost," he replied "Help me find that old coat George left the last time he was at home, and that quilted hood Mary used to wear. I must bundle up."

Coat and hood were soon found.

"Now, help me move this board, and shut it again as soon as I am through."

The board in question, a rough sliding-door, being seldom used, moved slowly; but at length, after repeated trials, Harry managed to crowd through the opening, and let himself down the ladder which led to the shed.

The prospect was gloomy. No lull in the storm which might have appalled a stouter heart than that of the child who went forth to brave its fury. Uncle George lived in the house in front of which his father had lingered, and this house he must reach. It was well that he did not stop to consider the difficulties of the way, else there might have been a different record of that night.

At first he walked cautiously; then, gaining confidence, quickened his steps. Soon he saw the lights in the village. No danger after that, and he pressed forward rapidly. Almost there! He ran; he shouted, and rushing into his uncle's house, he fell, crying:

"Go quick, Uncle George, or father will kill them all! Do go, quick!"

Deacon Jaquith and George Neal sprang from their chairs, at the same moment exclaiming:

"Have you come from home, Harry?"

"Yes," gasped the boy. "Do go quick! Father's awful, and Mary's all alone with him."

"Where's mother?" asked George.

"In the bedroom. But don't stop to talk. Go and see."

"Bring two lanterns, wife," said the deacon. "Sam, we shall need you," he added, speaking to a young man in the kitchen. "Get ready as quick as possible. George, you may lead the way."

"Yes, sir. I ought not to have stopped here. I felt as though something was wrong at home." And snatching up a lighted lantern, he was gone.

Sam was soon ready, and the deacon followed.

"They are all gone now," said Aunt Mary to Harry. "I must look after you; you are very wet."

"Yes, I guess I am, though I didn't think anything about it; I was so afraid father would kill mother and the baby. They don't know I came, but they'll be glad to see uncle and George. I don't know but I ought to go back."

"Not to-night, my boy. This is the place for you."

George was the first to reach the hut, and confronted his father so suddenly that for a moment the madman was quiet. Deceived by this, and turning to look for the other members of the family, there would have been a tragedy, had not Deacon Jaquith sprang forward to avert it.

"No more of that, Jack," he said, in a calm, stern voice. "None of your tantrums. Come here, Sam, and help me hold this fellow."

"What are you here for?" roared John Neal, struggling to free himself from the vise-like grasp which pinioned his arms.

"I am here to take care of you," was the reply.

Such oaths as this provoked, no pen should ever write. Curses, imprecations, and blasphemous taunts.

"Stop, or you shall be gagged. No more such talk as that," commanded the deacon.

Another effort for freedom, and this would have been successful but for George.

"If there is a strong rope on the premises, Mary, bring it to me. I don't care to waste so much strength when a rope will answer the same purpose."

Drinking Jack howled with rage, and, escaping from restraint, sprang to the bedroom door, shouting, "I'll kill that brat, and its mother, too!" But a well-aimed blow, given with a will, prostrated him.

"I guess father's dead now," whispered Nellie, who kept strict watch in the loft above.

She was mistaken, however. There was still need of the rope; and having been securely bound, John Neal was moved, not over-tenderly, into a corner, where he would be out of the way.

"Mother, mother!" then cried Mary, opening the door of the room where the poor woman had taken refuge. "Come out and get warm. Father can't hurt you now!"

There was no response, and Mary went in.

"Why, mother, are you asleep? Bring a light, George."

The mother had fainted; and the infant, which she clasped in her arms, was unconscious. Attention was

given them, Sam alone keeping guard over Jack. Nancy and Nellie were called. Such restoratives as the house afforded were applied, and Mrs. Neal was soon able to speak; but there was no awakening for her child in this world.

"The baby is dead," said Deacon Jaquith to his brother-in-law, a little past midnight.

"Dead!" repeated the brutal father.

"Yes; so you are saved the trouble of killing it."

I will not linger over the remaining horrors of that night. When the sun rose next morning, five persons wended their way over the rocks. Mrs. Neal was supported by her brother; Mary carried the body of her dead sister, while Nancy and Nellie followed.

A sad procession; but the sooner a comfortable shelter was found, the better; and it was impossible for any carriage to leave the hut.

"We are all here, wife; five living and one dead," said the deacon, as he ushered the party into a well-warmed room. "Take little Bessie and lay her away. It is a mercy that her sufferings are over." And no one of the family saw the child again until, wearing a white robe, she looked meet to dwell with the angels.

"First, we need breakfast; and then Ellen must lie down. She wasn't able to walk this morning; but she couldn't stay where she was."

"I don't wish for any breakfast. I can't eat."

"Well, child, lie right down here on the lounge," answered Mrs. Jaquith, kindly. "Perhaps you can drink a cup of tea after you get rested a little. Anyway, you shall do just as you please."

Mrs. Neal was Deacon Jaquith's youngest sister; and

why she married as she did, was a mystery no one could solve; although, as a young man, John was no worse than many others in the community.

This marriage had been a bitter trial to the deacon, who was a man of strict integrity and honor. It mortified him to acknowledge "Drinking Jack" as his brother-in-law, while it grieved him to see his sister and her children suffer as only a drunkard's family can suffer.

Ellen Jaquith did not expect this when she pledged her faith. Like many another woman, trusting idle words, she believed that her love would prove a safeguard in the hour of temptation. Bitterly had she been disappointed; and yet she hoped on, while children were born to share her wretchedness.

"You ought to leave your husband. It is your duty to leave him," her brother had often said. "You have no right to become the mother of children who must call such a man father. It is a sin for which you must answer at the bar of God. I have heard George wish, over and over again, that he had never been born; and I don't wonder."

Her husband had gone from bad to worse, until there seemed no lower depths for him to reach. Completely brutalized, the idea of appealing to his conscience or sense of responsibility seemed absurd.

Mrs. Neal, yielding to the persuasions of her sister and children, consented to lie down in a room prepared for her; but it was impossible for her sleep. She reviewed the events of the past night. She had assured her friends that she would never be separated from her husband unless he chose to leave her; now she was inclined to reconsider this decision.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER spending most of the day alone, toward evening she joined the family, and then learned that her brother had, without consulting her, made arrangements for the future. He had been to her old home and held some conversation with George, who still watched by his father; had talked with Mary, and was now ready to carry out his plans.

"Your consent is all that is needed," said the kind-hearted man, after telling her what he proposed. "Will you stay with us?"

"Yes, if I shall not be a burden, until I can do something to support myself. I don't feel as though I could ever live with John again."

"O mother! I am so glad," exclaimed Mary, while the younger children clapped their hands for joy.

"And I am thankful," added Deacon Jaquith. "Don't talk of supporting yourself. You will stay here until your children provide another home for you. Harry is going to be my boy. That was settled some time ago, and I rather think Nellie and her aunt have come to some understanding about living together. As for Nancy, Mrs. Boardman would like her company; but there is a home for her here. One trouble is off from my mind. You won't change, Ellen, and go back?" he added soon after.

"Not unless my husband reforms."

"Then the matter is settled. There is no prospect of that. The day of miracles is past. Do you authorize me to tell him your decision?"

"Yes, you may tell him," answered the wife with quivering lips; "I can't live any longer as I have done." And then they talked of Bessie's funeral, which was to take place the following day; of the scanty furniture remaining in the old house on the cliff, and of the children's prospects.

"George can make his own way and help the rest," said his uncle. "He is a good boy, true as steel, and no more like his father than white is like black."

Here a gesture from Mrs. Jaquith warned her husband that he should not enlarge upon this contrast, and he hastened to speak of other matters. In the evening George and his companion came down, saying that they had been ordered to leave, and, feeling quite willing to do so, thought best to obey.

"How is father?" asked Mary of her brother privately.

"Well enough when we came away. Raving about because mother was gone, and threatening all manner of vengeance; but he'll get tired of doing that alone. He has probably found out by this time that there isn't any rum in the house, and he will have to keep sober one night."

"O dear! if he would only keep sober all of the time," responded Mary.

"Yes, if he only would; but I never expect that. And now you are all out of his way, I don't mean to care. He has been the curse of my life."

"Don't say that, George," pleaded his sister. "I know it's true, but it hurts me to hear it. He is our father, after all."

George Neal turned away with an expression of disgust upon his good, strong face. How often, when younger, had he heard the taunt, "Drinking Jack's boy!" and how angry he had been. Then, as he grew older and realized all which this implied, it seemed burned into his forehead as a brand of shame. What wonder that he said his father had been the curse of his life?

After much deliberation, it was decided that Deacon Jaquith should visit his brother-in-law early the next morning, inform the wretched man of the time of Bessie's funeral, and ask him to be present. This sad occasion past, there would then be a fitting time to tell him the plans of his family. He might claim his children; but he had so publicly outraged every paternal obligation that the law would at once decide against him. Moreover, Deacon Jaquith was a man of character and influence, reasonably sure to succeed in what he attempted.

When morning came, George would not allow his uncle to go to the old house alone; and Sam, thinking that under the circumstances a party of three would be none too large, joined them. Mary asked permission to go, but was refused.

John Neal was wide awake that morning; sober, too, so far as liquor was concerned. Somewhat troubled and very much astonished at his wife's absence, he yet never dreamed but she would return; and as for the baby, he was half inclined to believe that the story of

its death was false. He had searched the house to see what it contained which could be disposed of for money, and had just put some coal in the rusty old stove, when he heard voices outside.

"Good-morning, John," said the deacon; but this greeting elicited no response. "How do you find yourself this morning?"

"Well enough; but what is that to you?" was the gruff reply.

"Perhaps nothing; perhaps a good deal. I came to tell you that Bessie will be buried to-day. The funeral will be at twelve o'clock, and I thought you might like to be present."

"Where is the funeral going to be?"

"At my house."

"Where is Ellen?"

"At my house."

"And the children?"

"With their mother."

"Well, what does all this mean, anyway?" now cried "Drinking Jack" with an oath.

"It means that I have given a shelter to your wife and children. There is no mystery about it."

"Aint there, though? What right has my wife to go off in this way? I am able to take care of my own family, and don't want any of your interference."

"Perhaps not; but I've no time to talk of that now. Will you come to Bessie's funeral?"

"I don't believe there's going to be any funeral. You want to scare me; but I'm too old for that game. Tell my wife and children to come home if they know what's good for themselves."

"And you won't come to Bessie's funeral?"

"I didn't say anything about that. What are you here for? Why don't you go about your business? George, what have you got in that basket?"

"Some clothes."

"Well, just put them back where they came from."

"Mother wants them," was the quick reply. And as his uncle stood between him and his father, the young man proceeded to fill the basket, while Sam was clearing an old chest of drawers which stood in the bedroom.

Directly Harry's face was seen through the window. He was afraid some of his treasures would be left, and had come to look after them. "I don't want father to see me," he said to Sam. "Open the window, and let me in. I know where Nellie's new shoes are, and she wants them. They're hid."

Sure enough, they were hid where no one would have thought of looking for them; and through Harry's agency several other things were brought to light.

"O dear! I wish we could take every single thing," he whispered. "Make up a good big bundle for me, Sam. I'm glad you thought to bring some twine."

"Guess 'twas a good idea. I always like to have stringing enough. Here's a bundle for you. Put a stick through the knot and carry it over your shoulder", saying which, Sam dropped a good-sized bundle through the open window. "Now be off," he added; "they're beginning to move round in the other room, and if your father should see us, there'd be a row. Keep out of sight of the old man."

Harry needed no second bidding. The bundle he carried was heavy, but he did not mind it.

Short and effective had been this visit to John Neal and not until he was left alone did he realize what had transpired.

Through all he had been defiant, at the very last sending an insolent message to his wife, and asserting his ability to manage his own affairs.

"Bessie's funeral will be at twelve." These were the deacon's parting words.

"It can't be true; it can't be true," he repeated to himself, over and over again. "They're trying to fool me." And he laughed in derision.

He looked into the bedroom, opened the door of the only closet in the house, and was convinced that something unusual was about to happen. Bessie might be dead.

He calculated the time by the sun, and wondered if it would be best to go to the deacon's. No; he wouldn't please the old man so much.

He added a few pieces of coal to the fire, brushed his boots with an old broom, and thought what a ragged, dirty fellow he was. No money, no credit. Yet he had always succeeded in getting liquor, and that was just what he needed. He would have it, too.

With this resolve he started for the village. Passing Deacon Jaquith's, he met one of his boon companions, who said carelessly, "So you've lost your baby, Jack."

It was true, after all. He stopped, and Mrs. Jaquith seeing him, went out. "Come in, John," she said; "come in and have some breakfast."

"I aint hungry," he replied.

"But some hot coffee will do you good; and perhaps you would like to look at Bessie before anybody comes."

Scarce knowing what he did, he entered the kitchen and sat down. He heard the voices of his children, and knew that his wife was in the adjoining room; and yet they seemed as far removed from him as though they had been miles distant.

Mary came, looking at him pityingly, as one would look at a suffering stranger. She did not speak, and at length he broke the silence.

"Is Bessie really dead?"

"Yes," she answered. "Didn't they tell you?"

"I—I—thought," he stammered.

"Thought what, father? You didn't suppose anybody would tell you a lie about it, did you?"

"I didn't know, Mary. Everything seems strange. I don't understand about your mother. Why didn't she stay at home?" he asked, with something of the old fierceness.

Mary went back to her mother, leaving him to partake of the coffee and food placed before him, and to which he did ample justice, although he had said he was not hungry.

After professing himself satisfied, Mrs. Jaquith led the way to the room where Bessie lay in her coffin. Here not even a sigh gave evidence of emotion. If the father's heart was touched, he gave no sign.

"Of course you will stay to the funeral?" said his companion.

"Don't know about that," was the reply. "I aint dressed up."

It was impossible to make John Neal look other than he was, a poor, miserable wretch; but all which could be done, under the circumstances, to improve his ap

pearance was done. Mary brushed his old clothes, her aunt provided some clean undergarments, and he was comparatively well dressed when he took a seat by the side of his wife, when the clergyman was seen coming toward the house.

At the close of the brief services, as the mourners prepared to follow the bier, which was borne by four young men, he said gruffly, "Come along, Ellen"; and without looking toward her, walked on. When several rods from the house, he observed that she was not with him, and turning to Mary, asked an explanation of her absence.

"She didn't wish to come," was the reply.

They had not far to go to reach the tomb in which the little coffin was placed. Brothers and sisters shed a few tears; but the father, thinking more of the living than the dead, looked sullen and defiant.

He returned to Deacon Jaquith's for the express purpose of ordering his family home, and took a wicked delight in calculating the labor of returning what had been brought from the old house. He would not lift a finger toward it, but he would see that it was done.

A well-spread table, to which all were invited, was awaiting the return of the mourners; but John Neal refused to sit down. The clergyman was present, and this was reason enough why he should go.

"Tell my wife I'm waiting for her," he said to a woman who was assisting in the work. "It's time to go home."

"Better not talk of that now," said the deacon, who had overheard this remark. "Let us have something to eat first." And the obstinate man, lured somewhat by the savory food, yielded.

Dinner over, the host, looking gravely at his brother-in-law, said slowly, "John Neal, I am authorized by my sister to say that she will never live with you again until you give up the use of liquor and become a sober man. Neither will you have any control over your children. From this time I assume the care of them."

Not a word replied the man thus addressed, although his lips moved and great drops of perspiration stood on his forehead. Some feeling more human than that of rage may have swept over him; but this he controlled, as was proved by the abuse and threats which he uttered so soon as he was able to speak. He called for his wife, declaring that dead or alive she belonged to him; that no power should keep her from him, and that he would not stir from the house without her.

Fortunately, the poor woman thus claimed as belonging to a brute was not present; but the children, accustomed as they were to their father's savage outbreaks, grew pale with terror. Once George rose and took a step toward him, when Mr. Adams, the clergyman, interposed.

At last the enraged man was peremptorily ordered to leave the house, when he commanded his children to come with him.

"No; they are not going," said the deacon, decidedly.

"But I will have them. The law gives a man his children."

"The law gives a man punishment for his sins; and you have done enough to send you to State's prison. The sooner you leave the house the better."

A threatening gesture, a profane assurance that a day

of reckoning would come, and "Drinking Jack" went out alone, while his children hastened to the room where their mother waited to hear the result of this interview.

"Father has gone," said Mary.

"Tell me what he said."

"Don't ask," exclaimed George before his sister could reply. "It is all over, and you are safe. I can work with good courage now. Uncle George will see that father don't get my wages, and sometime we'll have a home together. Keep up good spirits and everything will come out all right. Mary and I had better go back to work to-morrow morning, and Nancy can go to Mrs. Boardman's, if you think best."

"It will be best," was the reply. "I don't want to burden your uncle too much."

Straight to the village went John Neal, and when there, to a cellar where liquor was sold to all, however wretched, who could give an equivalent for the deadly draught.

"How are you, Jack? Didn't expect to see you to-day," said the proprietor. "Thought you had other business on hand. Glad you've come, though. A little accident happened last night, and I must have a new counter. You're just the man to make it. Want the job?"

"Yes; but I want something to drink before I think of work. You can trust me; and if you'll find me a place to sleep, I'll begin in the morning."

Before noon the next day, it was known that his family had abandoned him; yet none dared mention the

subject to him as, with clouded face and scowling brow, he worked at the task before him. Some said he would do worse than ever, but this was hardly possible. The only difference between the past and present lay in the fact that he could no longer expend his fury upon those whom he was bound to cherish and protect.

CHAPTER III.

IF his wife suffered mentally—and no woman in her condition but must suffer—she was, at least, spared the additional pain of cold, hunger, and fear. Her two youngest children remained with her, and were so happy in their new home that she caught something of their cheerfulness, even while she missed little Bessie, whose life had gone out in the wild storm.

Occasionally Harry and Nellie saw their father; and twice he called to them to come home; but he made no effort to reclaim them. He understood that a prosecution only waited some movement on his part; and his brother-in-law had assured him that, this prosecution once commenced, no mercy need be expected. It was hoped he would leave the vicinity; but as weeks went by there was no prospect that the hope would be realized.

Harry, who had a fancy for climbing the rocks, kept himself well informed as to the condition of the old house, and from time to time brought away such articles as would be of use to his mother.

As the spring advanced, there was a revival of religion in the village where Mary Neal was employed, and she was among the first to share its blessings. Then, anxious

that others should know the joy of sins forgiven, it was but natural that her thoughts should turn to the members of her own family.

While considering how she could influence them, she listened to a sermon from the text, "This kind goeth not out but by prayers and fasting." Was it possible that the evil spirit, which had so long held control of her father, could be exorcised? She remembered his brutality, his blasphemous profanity; and her faith faltered, even while the promises sounded in her ears.

She wrote to her mother, who, although having received a religious education, had never publicly acknowledged her obligation to lead a Christian life. Her brothers and sisters were each in turn addressed with affectionate earnestness; and, having done this, there remained only her father. To write to him would be worse than useless; and she certainly could not go to him after what had transpired. So she reasoned.

She obtained leave of absence from her work for a week, and went to her uncle's, where she received sympathy from those who had long experience in Christ's service. To Mrs. Jaquith she confided her anxiety for her father. "Do you think it would do any good for me to talk with him?" she asked.

"I am afraid not," was the reply. "I wish it could; but there don't seem to be anything to appeal to. He is so far gone, I don't suppose he would even hear you."

"But, Aunt Mary, Christ died for him as well as for me."

"I know it, dear; but some people sin away their day of grace, and are given up to work out their own de-

struction. There is no forgiveness for them. I'll talk with your uncle about it."

Mary knew what would be his answer, and therefore was not disappointed when he said nothing short of a miracle could convert such a wretch as her father. "If he could be persuaded to give up drinking, there might be some use in talking to him about religion," added the deacon.

"Religion must come first," she answered. "If he was a Christian, he would give up drinking. He would feel it to be his duty, and God would give him strength to do it."

"Yes, child; perhaps you are right."

Nothing more was said; but when Mary saw her father passing, she went out to speak to him.

"What do you want?" he asked, less roughly than she had expected.

"I want you to be a Christian."

"Christian!" he repeated, with a sneer, and an oath half escaped his lips.

"Don't swear, father, don't swear," said his daughter, laying her hand lightly on his arm. "If you do, I sha'n't have any faith to pray for you."

"What ails you, Mary? What do you mean by this kind of talk?"

"Mean what I say, father. I hope I have found religion, and I want you to find it too."

"Religion! I'll believe in your religion when I see something of it." And, without another word, he strode on.

Strange as it may seem, Mary Neal was encouraged. Her father had listened to her, and she hastened to tell

the good news. "Now, don't you think he can be influenced?" she asked.

"I don't know, child," replied her aunt. "If you ask the Holy Spirit's aid——"

"O, Aunt Mary! I always pray for that. I don't depend upon myself. I should like to go up to the old house, and I believe I will," added the young girl directly.

"No, child, don't do that. I know your uncle won't allow it. He won't think it's safe for you to go."

"But I'm not afraid. Father won't hurt me."

The good woman shook her head; and her husband coming in, the matter was referred to him.

"Go up on the cliff to-night!" he exclaimed. "No, indeed, child. There's no telling what might happen if your father should have a drunken fit."

"But, uncle, I feel as though I must go; and I know God will take care of me."

"I aint sure of that. I don't wonder you are anxious about your father; but it's no use to think of doing him any good by talking to him."

Mary was not convinced. She pleaded earnestly for the permission she desired; and at length her uncle said: "Ask your mother, and do as she thinks best."

As might have been expected, the daughter carried her point. Mrs. Jaquith gave her a well-filled basket, the contents of which were to serve as a peace-offering.

"Mary is a good girl," said the deacon to his wife, after she had gone. "She thinks she can do something for her father; but when she has lived as long as I have, she won't have much faith in making a Christian out of a rum-cask. I don't suppose I could say just that to

her ; for, somehow, it touched my heart to hear her tell how she had studied the promises, to see if there is any limit to God's mercy."

Up, up the narrow foot-path went Mary Neal; and, in her impatience, the way seemed long. How desolate looked the hut! The rocks which sheltered it from the winds seemed like prison walls. Through the window she saw her father; and, covering her face, she prayed that she might be able to speak some word which would reach his heart. Then, without waiting for her fears to gather strength, she opened the door and passed in.

"Father!" He looked up in surprise; but before he could speak, Mary added, "I wanted to come and see you, and I brought some supper. Would you like to have me stay?"

"Stay if you want to. 'Taint a very nice place here," he replied, with a mocking laugh. "There aint much left but the old shell, and that might as well go with the rest."

He was sober, and Mary's spirits rose at once.

"We must have some fire," she said. "We shall want tea with our supper."

Her father went into the shed, tore off a board, and lighted a fire. As he had said, there was but little left in the house; yet his daughter managed to arrange a tempting meal, of which he was nothing loth to partake. He ate in silence, asking no questions. When supper was over, however, he asked abruptly, "Mary, what made you come up here?"

"Because I want you to be a Christian. I came to talk with you about it." And, in her earnestness, she knelt beside him.

“Who sent you?”

“God,” she answered reverently; and from that moment all fear vanished. The Spirit must have given her utterance, as she warned, entreated, and prayed. Yes, prayed. Kneeling there, she poured out her soul in fervent supplication: “O father! you are such a sinner!”

“I’ve heard that often enough,” he said, in reply to this remark made by Mary, after she had risen from her knees.

“And don’t you believe it?” The clear, blue eyes of the young girl looked fearlessly into his own. “Don’t you believe it, father? You have made yourself and your family miserable, and I don’t know of any good you have ever done.”

Why didn’t he strike her down? Once he would have done so. Now something restrained him—astonishment, perhaps; for, except at the burial of his children, he had not heard a prayer for years, while he had never listened to such a one as fell from his daughter’s lips.

“Will you think of what I have said, and remember that I shall pray for you constantly?” she continued.

“I don’t know,” he replied. “Are you going now?”

“Yes; it is almost dark, and I promised not to stay long. You’ll find enough for breakfast in the cupboard. Good-night, father.”

He did not speak; but he stood at the door watching her until she was quite out of sight. Then he looked in the cupboard to see what had been left. An empty flask stood by a loaf of bread. If the flask had been full, he could have spared the bread. For some reason, which he could not himself explain, he had not drunk a

drop of intoxicating liquor through the day. He might go to the village. He took up his hat from the floor, then threw it down again.

It was night, but he was not sleepy. If he had something to read he might while away an hour. As he took down the battered candlestick a tract fluttered to the floor. Much as he disliked tracts, he read every word of this. Twice he read it; and its appeals were so direct that he thought it must have been written expressly for himself. The candle burned out in the socket, but he did not heed it. Light and darkness were the same to him, as conscience, so long silent, now thundered in his ears. Eagerly he hailed the morning, and hastened to the village, where he drank until he could laugh at the fancies which had tormented him.

Mary, not finding another opportunity to see him during the week, was forced to return to her work, feeling that she had failed of success in her efforts to influence him. Yet there remained the privilege of prayer; and during the next two months hardly a working hour passed in which she did not offer some petition for her father.

Occasionally she heard of him, but never anything which gave her encouragement. He worked and drank, avoiding all mention of his family, and utterly ignoring their existence. Gloomy and taciturn, his employers spoke to him only when necessary. In dissipation he did not seek companionship as formerly; but, going away by himself, he drank such quantities of liquor as would have killed an ordinary man. Frenzied by this indulgence, without being rendered unconscious, his wretchedness was only increased.

He realized now that he was a sinner. No need he should feel this more deeply. The great truth haunted him until he would have welcomed any change which promised relief. The tract he had read the night after Mary's visit had been destroyed, but not forgotten. He yearned for sympathy; but his proud heart would have broken rather than acknowledge it.

One evening he went home, as he still called the hut, with a firm determination never to see the light of another morning. It seemed to him that nothing could be worse than to live on as he was; yet when he stood face to face with death, his false courage gave way, and for the first time in many years he wept.

The next day Mary Neal received a letter, consisting of a few irregular lines, which she read with great difficulty.

Her father wished to see her. Oh! how her heart leaped with joy. He would wait for her at home, and she should find enough to eat. "Come quick!" She hastened to obey. "Don't tell anybody I sent for you."

She regarded this request, although after reaching her uncle's it was very difficult to do so.

"You must not think of going near your father," said Deacon Jaquith. "People don't think of speaking to him if they can help it; and it isn't safe for you to trust yourself alone with him."

"But I must go and see him," replied the young girl. "I came over on purpose to see him. Oh, uncle! you don't know how much I have prayed for him; and I do believe he will be a Christian."

"I wish I could believe so, child. But I don't see any hope for him."

"I see hope for him," said Mary, with confidence. "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."

Deacon Jaquith stood rebuked; and after some consideration, acknowledged that he might be wrong. "Go, if you think best, and may the blessing of God go with you."

Harry reported that he had seen his father carry a full basket home; so Mary was able to excuse herself from accepting her aunt's proffered bounty.

"I may spend the night," she said to her mother.

"No, child, don't do that. I shall be very anxious if you do."

"But I may want to stay, and father may want to have me," urged the daughter. "I shall know when I get there; and perhaps I shall tell him that you are praying for him."

"Not unless he asks about me. It won't be best; and I have so little faith, I'm afraid my prayers won't do any good."

John Neal saw his daughter long before she reached the hut, and waited for her at the door. "O, Mary, I'm glad you've come," he exclaimed, extending his hands, while tears streamed down his cheeks.

"Are you glad to see me?" she asked, in a choked voice.

"Glad! Yes, child. Come in and pray for me."

Astonishment sealed her lips, as she looked at her father's anxious, care-worn face.

"I am such a sinner!" he groaned.

"You are such a sinner," repeated Mary, almost involuntarily.

"I know it. Is there any mercy for me?"

"Mercy, father! Why, Christ died for you. Didn't you know that?"

"I know you said so," answered the wretched man. 'But I'm worse than anybody else ever was. Think how I've treated your mother and abused the children. There can't be mercy for such a sinner.'

"Yes, father, there is," Mary hastened to reply. "Sit down and let me read some of Christ's promises."

"No, no! don't read to me. Pray for me. There's nobody else to pray for me."

"Mother prays for you."

"Is that true? Does your mother pray for me?"

"Yes, father; she has prayed for you ever since she became a Christian—almost two months now. Don't you ever pray for yourself?"

"How can I?"

"Ask God to forgive your sins, for Christ's sake."

"I can't, I can't! I shouldn't dare to pray."

"But you have dared to swear."

"I know it, and God knows it. Oh! pray for me!"

"If you will kneel down with me, I will then pray," said Mary.

There was no hesitation on his part; and the prayer which followed, broken with sobs and interrupted with groans, was a continued, repeated cry for mercy. At length Mary rose from her knees, while her father only bowed still lower his head.

"O God! forgive my sins." One single petition, and he who uttered it, trembling at his own boldness, sprang to his feet and rushed from the hut.

His daughter, while carefully observing his movements, prepared supper, for which she found abundant

provision. Her father had redeemed his promise that there should be enough to eat, and by the time she had arranged it upon the table he came in.

"I found so many good things in the cupboard that I hardly knew which to take," said Mary, cheerfully. "You must have expected that we should be very hungry."

"I expected you would want something to eat," was the reply. "Did you find the tea?"

"Yes, and there's some of it ready to drink. Come, let us sit down to the table."

"I can't eat, child. It don't seem to me as though I can ever eat again, unless I get rid of this burden of sin; and I'm afraid that never'll be."

"Yes, it will be, father. I know it will." And a happy light shone in the eyes of the speaker. "I have asked God to forgive your sins, and He certainly will."

"Do you believe that?"

"Why, father, I know it."

"How do you know?"

For answer, Mary Neal took from her pocket a Testament, in which numerous passages had been marked, and read, one after another, the gracious sayings and precious promises to repentant sinners. Her father listened eagerly, a ray of hope sometimes flitting across his face, only to be succeeded by the despairing expression worn before.

CHAPTER IV.

"Now, sit down to the table," said Mary, after closing her Testament. "It is almost night."

"Are you going to leave me?"

"Not if you want me to stay. I told mother I should stay, if you wanted me to."

"And what did she say?"

"Truth is always best," thought the young girl; and she reported the conversation between her mother and herself.

No entreaty could induce her father to eat, although he drank several cups of tea, while urging her to taste of everything he had provided. Sleeping was as impossible for him as eating. Mary, too anxious to close her eyes, sometimes reclining upon the one poor bed, sometimes talking, and sometimes praying, was glad when the night had passed.

In the evening Harry came up, accompanied by Sam, and after looking through a window long enough to be sure of what was going on within, hastened home to tell the strange story that father and Mary were kneeling down together.

"I heard father cry, too," added Harry. "I know he won't hurt Mary now; and perhaps he is going to be good."

"Hadn't you better go up and see what it means?" said Mrs. Jaquith to her husband.

"No; it wouldn't be best," was the reply. "Mary has begun the work, and she don't need any of my help."

The next morning the sun had hardly risen when the deacon, hearing a loud rap, opened the kitchen door, and met his brother-in-law, who said, in broken accents:

"I've come to ask your forgiveness. Will you forgive me?"

"Of course I will," answered the astonished man. "Come in and sit down. I want to talk with you. Where is Mary?"

"She's up home; and I suppose you want to know what sent me here, when the last time I was here before I swore I'd never darken your doors again as long as I lived."

"I should like to know," was the reply.

"I came because I couldn't help it," said John Neal. "I've been a terrible sinner, and I'm trying to get forgiveness."

"You've sinned against God, most of all."

"I know it; and I'm afraid He'll never forgive me."

Deacon Jaquith was a Christian; and now that his visitor expressed sorrow for sin, he at once endeavored to comfort him with assurances of pardon.

"But think what I have been," was urged in response. "Do you suppose anybody thought Drinking Jack had a soul? I've been the worst drunkard on the coast, and gloried in it. Oh! pray for me!"

The whole family were aroused, but no one entered the kitchen.

After a prayer, John Neal said :

“If you are willing, I should like to see Ellen long enough to ask her forgiveness.”

Mrs. Neal was called. Her husband asked her one question, which she answered; and then he went out alone.

All that day nothing was talked of but the visit of the morning. It was hoped Mary would come down; but she remained at her post. Harry went up to ask how long she was going to stay.

“As long as father wants me,” was the reply. “Tell mother not to worry about me. I have enough to eat, and I’m trying to do some good.”

Another night passed, and still John Neal felt the horrors of remorse. It seemed to him that every wrong act of his life was remembered. Oh! it was so terrible, this dark record, no word of which could he erase!

At length he read the Bible, prayed, and tried to look away from his sins, until there came into his heart a blissful assurance that Christ died for him.

“I do believe it,” he cried, joyfully. “Christ died for me. Bless you, Mary, for trying to save me; and I bless God that He sent His Son to die for me, bad as I am.”

“You won’t drink any more rum now?” said Mary, her thoughts reverting to the terrible habit which had well-nigh ruined him, soul and body.

“No, child, I won’t. I’ll try to do what is right,” he replied.

Mary Neal had then spent three nights in the old house, and her father thought it best that she should return to her uncle’s.

"I shall sleep to-night, and you will be more comfortable there," he said, as he urged her to leave him. "To-morrow I must go to work early, and see what I can do."

"And may I tell mother that you are a Christian?"

"Tell her that I trust in Christ for mercy, and shall try to lead a different life. Pray for me that I may do right."

Harry and Nellie met their sister, eager to hear the news, asking, both in a breath:

"Is father going to be a good man?"

"I hope so," was the reply.

"Oh! won't it be strange if he is?" said Harry. And this expressed the feelings of all to whom the possibility of such an event was suggested.

"Time will tell," remarked Deacon Jaquith, scarce daring to believe what he had seen and heard.

John Neal's employer, glad to see him back the next morning, said:

"Ready to work again, Jack?"

"Yes, sir; I am anxious to work. I want to earn some money."

"Well, Jack, I am ready to pay you money; but I wish you'd spend it for something besides rum."

"I mean to, Mr. Dean. I'm going to do better than I have."

Mr. Dean attached no importance to these assertions; but at the end of the week, no one had seen Jack drink. Indeed, it was settled, in a consultation of his old cronies, that he hadn't tasted a drop of liquor since the Saturday before. Another week went by, and never had he accomplished so much work in the same time

Deacon Jaquith called upon him, and they had a long conversation.

"Do you find it hard work to keep your resolution about drinking?" asked the visitor.

"Sometimes it is," was the reply.

"I had given you up, brother John."

This was the first time Deacon Jaquith had ever called John Neal "brother," and tears started to the eyes of the man thus addressed.

"I know you had," he answered, at length. "You wanted to reform me, and tried to have me leave off drinking; but it was no use to talk that way to me. My heart needed changing, before my actions could be."

"And you think your heart is changed?"

"I know it is. I shouldn't want to read the Bible, and pray, if it wasn't. I used to hate the Bible. I used to hate God; and I don't know but I hated everybody. I am glad you took my family away from me; and I'll pay you for taking care of them, if I live long enough to earn the money. I shall be paid next Saturday, and I'd give you every cent, but I must have some clothes."

"I don't want any of your money, brother John. Keep it, and make good use of it; but come and see us when you can. We are expecting George to spend the Sabbath with us."

"Mary wrote me that he was coming."

"Then Mary writes to you?"

"Yes; and I've read her letters till they are all worn out."

Two or three drunkards of the town had invited Jack to drink with them during these weeks, but had been so decidedly refused that they did not presume to urge him

Yet it was expected that he would soon give up his way of living, and the rum-seller looked nightly for the return of his old customer.

John Neal spent his Sabbaths on the cliff; where, alone, he read the Bible and thought of God's mercy. Sometimes his sins would seem to hide the Saviour's face; but prayer soon removed the veil. If tempted by the demon of drink, he prayed; if lonely, he prayed; and never did he pray in vain.

The Sabbath George was expected, he sat from early morning where he could look down the path which led to the house, and at length was rewarded by the appearance of his son, who came forward with quick, bounding steps, as though impatient for the meeting. Then the hours passed quickly; so much was to be said, and such happy experiences to be compared. Both hoped their sins were forgiven, and both were striving to lead new lives; so there was a strong bond of sympathy between them. George had sought his father, half doubting the change of which he heard; but when they parted, this doubt had been removed.

"I do believe father is a Christian," he said to his uncle. "I was sorry to leave him alone up there, but he said it was best. He talked a good deal about little Bessie, and cried because he hadn't thought any more of her when she was alive."

"What did father say?" was the question asked by the children; and although each one had received an answer, the half was not told.

By this time the whole community had heard of the reform of John Neal, and were watching to see what would be the end.

Many thought it impossible that he should become a Christian, while all feared that he would turn back to his old habits.

This fear was expressed to him, when he answered mildly: "I don't wonder you think so, but I am sure God will give me strength to persevere. Oh! if you could all see my heart, you would think very differently of me from what you do now. Nobody ever knew how bad I was, and nobody can ever know how much I suffered when I saw it all myself. It makes me shudder to think of it; but I believe God has forgiven my sins."

"You are sure of that?"

"I am sure Christ died for me, and His blood has paid the ransom for my sins."

The man to whom this was said was not a Christian; and this simple, earnest faith was a sermon more eloquent than he had ever before heard. Whoever addressed John Neal upon the subject of his reform received a frank response, while he intruded his personal experience upon no one. Working constantly, avoiding temptation, so far as might be, and yet meeting it fairly when challenged, time passed on.

Summer, with its glories, flooded the earth, when it was known that Jack, as he was still called, had bought a piece of land of his brother-in-law not far from the village, and ground was already broken for a cellar.

"You say there's going to be a house here before winter," said one, looking at the workmen who plied pick-axe and shovel.

"That's what the owner of the land says, and he's likely to know," was the reply. "He understands building houses."

"I suppose he does; but I can't quite believe yet that Drinking Jack's going to be a sober man the rest of his life."

"You never heard him pray, I guess."

"I never did," answered the doubter.

"Then you don't know anything about it. He prayed me out of a drunken fit two days ago."

"How is that?"

"Well, I'll tell you. I got as drunk as ever Jack was, and fell down going home. I knew I fell down, but I didn't know anything more till I heard Jack praying, and I don't believe there was ever anything like it before. I got up sober, and that's a fact, whether you believe it or not. Don't talk about Drinking Jack; call him Praying Jack, and tell the truth."

The clergyman who had attended Bessie's funeral sought frequent opportunities of conversing with her father, gaining at each interview more decisive evidence that his heart was indeed changed.

His family were fully convinced of this, and as, during the autumn, the new house approached completion, they looked forward to a reunion beneath its roof. Mrs. Neal, with her three younger children, was ready to go when asked to do so, although uncle and aunt pleaded that one might remain.

George and Mary contributed of their earnings to furnish the house, and while everything was plain, there was no lack of comforts.

Much remained to be done; but unfinished chambers and unpainted doors were of small consequence. It was home. They gathered around the table, acknowledging their dependence upon a higher Power, and at

night the husband and father implored the blessing of Almighty God to rest down upon them.

"If Bessie had only lived!" said Nelly, softly.

"Yes, if Bessie had only lived, I should have six children to love and work for," responded her father.

"Do you love us?" asked the youngest of his flock.

"No wonder you ask me, child, but I do love you all." And the strong man gathered her in his arms, while tears filled all eyes; tears of joy, more expressive than smiles, and oftentimes sweeter in their influence.

Deacon Jaquith, who could not deny himself the pleasure of looking in upon them the next morning, thought he never had seen happier faces. "Well, brother John, beginning life anew, are you?" he said.

"Trying to," was the reply.

"You look well satisfied with your lot."

"I am, and so would you be if you had longed for a home as much as I have the last six months. I've thought a good deal more of it than of anything else, except God's mercy. And now I don't want to leave it, even to go to work; but I've promised, and I must keep my word."

It would be pleasant to linger over the days that followed; but as this would make my story quite too long, I must forbear.

Two years had John Neal held fast to his resolve to lead a sober life, never once violating the promise made to his daughter, when, after much deliberation and many prayers, he decided to make a public profession of his faith in Christ.

His friends had often urged this upon him as a duty, and as often had he referred to his past life as a reason

why he ought not to assume the responsible position of a church member. "I have been known so many years as 'Drinking Jack' that people still call me so," he would say. "Think what a dishonor this name might bring upon the church."

Gradually, however, this name fell into disuse. His employers and his old associates began to address him as Mr. Neal. He gained the respect and confidence of the whole community, and was welcomed in all religious meetings. His wife and three children waited to come forward with him, and at length he presented himself before the church for examination. It was expected that he would be ignorant of doctrines which some consider essential, but, on the contrary, he had studied the Bible to such good purpose that his answers were clear and intelligent.

The house was full the day when he and his family were to unite with the church, many being present who were never before seen on such an occasion.

It did not seem enough to the reformed drunkard that he should simply assent to the articles of faith, receive the seal of baptism, and enter into covenant with the followers of Christ. Publicly had he outraged the laws of God and humanity, and publicly was confession now made. This confession was read by the pastor, while John Neal stood with bowed head before the people, his tearful eyes attesting to its sincerity.

No other part of the services produced such an impression as this. Hard men unused to tears; dissipated men, who had sometimes sneered at Jack's new religion; infidels, who ignored all accountability to a higher than

earthly power, were alike moved. It was a scene to be remembered.

There was no alcoholic wine at this sacrament, as before, but now a substitute was used, that the pledge so solemnly made and so publicly ratified might not first be broken at the Lord's table.

The congregation separated with few words, but in their homes the events of the day were earnestly discussed.

"If Jack had a soul, I suppose I've got one," said a man who was scarcely better than John Neal had been. "That paper the minister read was more than I could stand. I've tried to laugh at Jack when he's preached to me; but I sha'n't laugh any more. He can preach as much as he wants to, and I'll hear him."

Since that day John Neal has been a faithful preacher of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; and still dwelling by the sea, now that three-score years have crowned him with "the beauty of old men," he rejoices in his labors to win souls to Christ.

TENTING BY THE ROADSIDE.

TENTING BY THE ROADSIDE.

CHAPTER I.

NOBODY knew whence they came, but here they were, husband and wife, with four sturdy, sun-browned boys, camped in the highway on the border of an unfrequented road. The woman said they had traveled on foot more than a hundred miles, pushing before them a hand-cart containing quilts and blankets, a few cooking utensils, and a change of clothing. They fitted up a bedroom where it was sheltered on three sides by a dense growth of evergreen trees, and constructed a rude fire-place of stones by a babbling brook, and thus set up housekeeping.

The arrangement might not be altogether comfortable, but they hoped for fine weather, and in case of a storm they had a square of tarpaulin for a roof over their heads. Moreover, practice had taught them to make the most of all materials at their command, so that where others might perish from exposure they could bid defiance to the elements. Some people said they ought not to be permitted to remain there for a single week. The town had not appropriated four rods in width for all highways for the accommodation of

squatters. A hoard of paupers, hailing from nowhere, might come down upon them at any time, liable to make a heavy bill of expense. Besides, no decent family would live as did the new-comers. They might prove to be thieves, or even worse; although the very next day after their arrival, the man, who gave his name as Jerome Danton, applied for work at the nearest farm-house, and upon trial proved himself a rapid and skillful worker. There was not an unoccupied house in town, and if there had been, he was too poor to pay rent. Being visited by one of the selectmen, he frankly stated his circumstances, acknowledging that his unfortunate condition was the result of his own improvidence and wrongdoing. If allowed to build a shanty and cultivate a strip of land by the roadside, he pledged himself not to trespass upon the rights of others. Appearances were against him, but he only desired the privilege of earning an honest living for himself and family, and so favorably did he impress his visitor, who owned the adjacent land, that his request was granted, with the condition that he should leave at any time when notified to do so.

Not long after, some young men, intent upon mischief, walked in the direction of the camp one evening, and, hearing the sound of voices, paused to listen. The Bible was being read, each reading a verse in alternation. Then there was a moment's hush, and the father prayed long and earnestly, while those who came with thoughts of evil, went their way, wondering at what they had heard.

Jerome Danton built a shanty of boards, for which he had honestly paid. The boys worked early and late,

clearing stones and brush from a piece of ground allotted for a garden. The stones helped to make a chimney, and the arrangements for comfort and convenience under the closest restrictions quite astonished all observers. Those who employed Mr. Danton were also astonished at the long days of labor given in return for only ordinary wages.

In the early summer Mrs. Danton went occasionally to the village store, making her purchases with great discretion; and when the late term of school commenced there were no more neatly-dressed children in attendance than hers—the oldest ten years of age, and the youngest four. Such books as they required were furnished at once, and whoever might be tardy or absent, these boys were punctually in their places. Their recitations, too, were usually perfect, so that they were thoroughly reliable scholars.

As was natural, their teacher, Miss Bruce, was curious to see the home of which she had heard. “Mother’ll be glad to see you,” said the oldest boy, when she expressed her intention of calling upon his mother. “She used to be a teacher, and we’ve told her how much we like you. Rob puts you next to mother in his world.”

“Does he? I’m so glad,” responded Miss Bruce, looking down into the little fellow’s upturned face. “Next to mother is a place of honor. I have no mother. She died when I was no older than Rob, and my father died before I was grown up.”

“How did you get along?” asked Harry, holding fast his younger brother’s hand.

“Just as well as I could; but I missed them sadly,” was replied.

"I'm ever so sorry. We've got a dear, good mother that always did everything for us; and now father's just as good as she is. He reads the Bible and prays every night, and don't never drink anything that makes him bad."

A warning gesture from Lester, the eldest of the boys, prevented a further revelation, but Miss Bruce could easily supply what remained unsaid, and she became more anxious to visit the house in the highway.

She had not long to wait. The very next day she received an invitation to accompany the children home; and there, standing just outside the door, Mrs. Danton received her with that cordial grace which makes one forget whether welcomed to palace or hovel. Supper was in readiness, the table spread with a snowy cloth, and the plainest of crockery, recently purchased, yet all so nicely arranged that it was really attractive. A tumbler filled with wild flowers and a bowl of early strawberries claimed special attention. No apologies were made by the hostess, as she gave of her best with willing hand, while her guest wondered at her intelligence.

As teachers, they compared notes. As botanists, they talked of the flowers then blooming in the shady nooks or on sunny slopes. Miss Bruce found her own knowledge meager when compared with that of the woman to whom she listened with ever-increasing wonder.

"My love of flowers has been a great resource of happiness," she said when some surprise was expressed that she had found time to study them in the midst of so many family cares. "I have lived a good deal out of doors with my children in summer, and in autumn too. When my husband would be chopping in the woods,

even after snow had fallen, we would spend a day with him, building a fire on some flat rock and cooking our dinner there. It was always a great treat to the children, and I could not have lived confined within doors."

After this visit Miss Bruce was interrogated on every hand in regard to what she had seen and heard, and very glad was she to be able to speak in terms of unqualified commendation.

"Well, it beats me," said her landlady. "Them folks came here like gypsies and settled down in the highway, and everybody thought they needed looking after, for fear they'd steal or do something worse; and now it seems as though, from all we can find out, that they're decent, and able to take care of themselves without asking favors of anybody. I wish we had a minister to go over there and talk with them. Men that have talked with Mr. Danton thinks he knows a great deal. There's one thing certain, he can do most any kind of work, and do more of it than anybody else round here. There must be something wrong, or he wouldn't be so poor. I aint going to ask you what you think about it, but it's my opinion liquor's been the trouble."

"It is generally safe to credit liquor with most of the poverty and misfortune in the world," was replied somewhat evasively.

"That's so, Miss Bruce; and, according to my mind, there aint no danger of charging too much to it."

"I think not. If all the misery and wretchedness caused by the use of intoxicating liquor could be known it would appall the strongest heart."

"'Appall the strongest heart,' Miss Bruce. Why, I think it would move the very rocks and mountains. If

I could find words to tell of all that's happened in this town since I can remember through drinking liquor, you wouldn't want to stay here another day; and I don't suppose there's been near so bad things happened here as in some other places. I don't know as 'twould do any good to write it all out and print it, but 'twould make a bigger story than any I ever read in the great story papers; and the worst part of it is kept out of sight, so nobody knows what 'tis but them that have to hear it. Now, when the truth is all told, I believe we shall find out that Mr. Danton has been a hard drinker, even if he hasn't been an actual drunkard. I'm sorry for his wife. I guess she's a nice woman."

Mrs. Danton was all that is implied by this description, and far more. She was a happy woman, too, singing at her work as she thought of all the blessings God had bestowed upon her. Her busy brain was constantly planning what she helped to execute, sure of ready assistance. Never lonely, although alone for many hours of the day, she often surprised her husband and children with some new device for their comfort. There were no lagging footsteps in the household. Their garden supplied them with an abundance of vegetables, while the fields afforded a succession of luscious berries.

The boys contributed their full share to the general fund of labor. They made rapid improvement in school, and were considered as good boys as there were in town. People ceased to complain of the family as occupying land to which they had no title. They were free to remain by the roadside so long as they pleased.

But late in the autumn an old house owned by a man for whom Mr. Danton had worked was vacated, and he

was asked to occupy it, paying the rent by caring for a flock of sheep through the winter. This unexpected offer was gladly accepted; and a few days after the new tenant went to the nearest railroad station and returned with a load of furniture, which had evidently seen service.

Curiosity was again excited. It was known that Mr. Danton had mailed a letter at the village post-office and received a reply. Many called upon Mrs. Danton, more to see the arrangement of her house than to see herself. The report made was far from satisfactory, yet no one presumed to ask any direct questions. Later, however, visitors to this house were most agreeably surprised by the result. Canvassing the town for means to pay a minister's salary, they were cordially welcomed and a generous contribution pledged. If so poor a man could give, others surely could; and whenever this was told it stimulated to a like generosity.

A minister was at once secured, a Sunday-school organized, and weekly meetings established in different localities. Mr. Robbins, the clergyman, was enthusiastic in his work, inspiring others with something of his own spirit.

But here, as elsewhere, opposition was encountered. In one corner of the town there was a small woolen mill employing a number of men whose families lived in the neighborhood. A store was opened there, with a reading-room, as the proprietor termed a rough apartment containing a few chairs and two long tables, on which were displayed some flashy papers. The room was well warmed and lighted, and everybody was invited to "come in and be comfortable, with not a cent to pay." Of course there was a purpose in this. Guests were ex-

pected to pay the cost of lighting and warming in the profits upon liquors they would drink, and for some reason the place attracted many boys and young men who might have been supposed to be above such associations. A meeting held in the school-house of the district was disturbed by a delegation from this room, whose report was received with shouts of derision.

CHAPTER II.

“THAT rum-hole has got to be broken up before any good can be done in this part of the town,” said Mr. Danton to his pastor. “I have seen enough of such things ; I can speak from experience, too. There’s nothing like liquor for keeping a man away from Christ. As long as a rum-shop can hold its ground in a community you can’t expect a revival of religion. I’ve seen it tried.”

“But what can be done? The town authorities licensed the store for the sale of liquor.”

“I know they did, and shame to them for doing it! I’d sooner my boys would die than spend their evenings in such a place. I know the consequences of such evenings, and if I could have one man to stand by me I would go into that rum-hole and tell my own story, and, God helping me, I would save some others from what I have suffered.”

“I will stand by you anywhere,” replied the clergyman, whose eyes were dimmed with sympathetic tears. “I know nothing of your past life more than has been told me of what it has been here ; but if you have a story to tell I shall be glad to hear it.”

“Thank you ; I have no desire to tell it except to benefit others ; but that dram-shop must be closed by some means.”

Many said this ought to be done. Such a place was a curse to the town, but no one was willing to assume any responsibility in the matter.

Mr. Danton consulted again with Mr. Robbins, and at an appointed time they went to the store in company and asked permission to speak and pray there for a few minutes. Such a request, thus made, could not be refused, and one old man, who offered a chair to the minister, rapped for order. Without further delay Mr. Danton began to talk, and gradually all other sounds were hushed.

"As you know, I came to this town last spring, traveling on foot, with my wife and children. I don't know why I didn't stop before I got here, nor why I didn't go further; but it seemed as though that north road was the place for me, and there I pitched my tent. Since then you may have known how I lived; but have you never wondered why a man should be traveling the country as I did?"

"Guess we have," responded a young man bolder than his companions. "That is just what we want to know."

"And that is just what I want to tell you," said Mr. Danton, looking around upon his audience. "Twelve years ago last spring I was married. I settled down on a good farm I had paid for with my own earnings. It was well stocked, I had a good team of horses, and I owed no man a dollar. I had as good a wife as a man can have, and I honestly intended to be a good husband. I loved my wife, and I was proud of her, too, for she was a better scholar than I was; and I calculated she should have as good a home as I could make for her

If anybody had told me the time would ever come when I should neglect her I should have sworn it was a lie ; and if anybody had told me I should ever be traveling on foot with her and four little boys, pushing a hand-cart before me, and sleeping at night with the stars looking down on me, I should have been ready to kill the man who slandered me so."

By this time the attention of every one within sound of Jerome Danton's voice was wholly absorbed in listening to what he might say. Even the proprietor of the establishment forgot to calculate the profits of the evening, and leaned over his counter in eager expectancy. There was a short silence, and then the speaker resumed his story.

"For four years we prospered, although the habit of drinking an occasional glass of liquor grew upon me. My wife never thought of this before we were married, and when she began to think of it she didn't believe I could ever be a drunkard. She begged of me to give up drinking, and I laughed at her for feeling bad about it, though sometimes I'd promise to be more temperate. Perhaps I should have kept such a promise if it hadn't been that a new store was opened about a mile from my house, where you could buy all kinds of family supplies, and all kinds of liquors. The owner sold some things pretty cheap, and it wasn't long before he had a good run of custom. He had plenty of company, too, winter evenings, and of course the men who sat by his fire patronized his bar ; I got so I went there every night, and I did my share of treating the crowd.

"Sometimes I paid money down for the drinks, and sometimes I had them charged ; but once in six months

there was a settlement, when I would give a note for the amount of my indebtedness.

“Of course I neglected my work, and my farm was running down. I sold stock to pay my taxes, and as for my family, I provided as meanly for them as I could while they could get so much of their living from the farm. They could eat a good deal that I couldn't sell, and my wife had a faculty of making the best of things. The last years she didn't very often say anything to me to try to have me do better. She knew 'twould be of no use.

“Well, finally, I had to let my farm go, and everything else we had any claim on, except the furniture; that used to belong to my wife's mother. We had a little money left after my debts were paid, and I gave half of that to my wife. That was what we lived on when we were traveling. We moved into a miserable house, and I worked enough to pay for my liquor and keep my family from starving. I went to the store the same as I had for so long, and my money would buy as many drams as ever; but when it was gone my company wasn't wanted any longer.

“I used to hate myself for being such a brute, but still I kept on. I was ashamed to go home to my family, but they never found fault with me, and the worst time I ever saw I never struck one of them a blow when I was in liquor; but I left them to grow poorer and poorer.

“I went to the store one evening last April with only enough in my pocket to pay for one drink, and that I was saving till the last minute, when a young man came in and called for three glasses, which he drank one after

another. He seemed half-crazed, but he was one who wouldn't bear being interfered with. He stood there in the middle of the room looking round. The door was opened and his old mother came in, and, kneeling down on that dirty floor, threw her arms around his knees and cried as though her heart would break. When she could speak she begged him to go home with her, and there wasn't a man there but what pitied her. He was all she had. We almost held our breaths to hear what he would say, as she looked up into his face so pitifully. What do you think that boy did? What would any of you do if your mother should come in here, and on her knees beg you to come home with her and give up drinking liquor? Perhaps some of you are the sons of widowed mothers."

By this time the excitement of the listeners was intense, and although no response was made to these questions, tearful eyes attested to their power.

"Perhaps some mother begged her boy not to come here to-night; and it may be she is praying this very minute that he may come home to her sober. Mothers are very anxious for their boys. You will never know how anxious until you see what I saw—a mother kneeling at the feet of her son, when he ought to kneel to her. I will tell you what that boy did. He wrenched himself away from her clasping arms and kicked her over, so that she fell against the stove, cutting a terrible gash on the side of her head. 'You have killed your mother! You have killed your mother!' cried half a dozen voices.

"'Killed my mother!' he exclaimed. 'Killed my mother! It was the fiery liquor killed her, and may

God strike me dead if I ever taste another drop of the awful stuff.' He said this standing over his mother. Then he stooped down, caught her up in his arms, and rushed through the open door. She was a little woman, while he was large and strong, so he could easily carry her. 'Somebody ought to look after that boy. If he has killed his mother he deserves hanging,' said the rum-seller. 'Wonder what the man who sold him the liquor deserves,' I responded. 'He wouldn't have been what he is now if it wasn't for this accursed place. It has ruined a good many.' 'Perhaps you think it has ruined you,' he retorted with a sneer. 'I know it has,' I answered. 'I know it has; but not another drop of liquor will ever go down my throat.' And I started for the door. Six others followed me, making the same promise.

"I went home to my wife and told her what had happened; but we couldn't stop to rejoice long over my pledge before we started for Mrs. Gilmore's. It wasn't a great ways, and when we got there George met us at the door, saying over and over: 'Mother's alive, and she has forgiven me.' She had been stunned at first, but the bleeding and the night air brought her to her senses, though she didn't remember all that had happened till after George laid her down on the lounge in her own sitting-room. My wife and I stayed there half the night, and talked and prayed, and were glad and sorry all together.

"Two weeks from then I made up my mind I could start anew easier in some other place, and as all the money we had was what my wife had saved of what I gave her, there wasn't any way for us but to walk. My

wife and children were used to living outdoors a good deal, or they never could have done as they did. I helped them all I could, and now I should be glad to help any of you. My story is told."

As he thus said Mr. Danton kneeled upon the floor, his pastor kneeling beside him and praying for a blessing upon the words which had been spoken. When the prayer was ended but few in either room were standing. The owner of the store was upon his knees, sobbing audibly. He had a praying mother, whose warnings and entreaties he now remembered.

The next day the store was closed. Without the profits of the liquor-selling it could not be supported. It was but a small place, yet who can tell the misery which might have been there wrought?

Not long after, in a religious meeting where the Spirit of the Lord seemed moving upon all hearts, an old man arose and, leaning heavily upon his cane, said: "I want you all to thank God that when our highways was laid out they was made four rods wide, so there was room for Brother Danton to pitch his tent beside the road. I've thought sometimes there was a good deal of land wasted, but we've got double for it all. I never expected to see such a day as this. It's wonderful. But the Lord reigns, and blessed be the name of the Lord!"

SCRAPS AND HIS COMPANION.

JOHN AND HIS COMPANION

SCRAPS AND HIS COMPANION.

It was a day to be remembered for the intense cold and pitiless wind which made itself felt in every street and alley of the great city.

Business men, so disguised with wrappings they could hardly be recognized, walked rapidly. Few ladies were abroad, even in close carriages. Poor women, whom necessity compelled to go out from such miserable shelter as they could afford, shivered and faltered as a fierce gust swept by, threatening to deprive them of scanty cloaks or tattered shawls which were their only protection.

Children hastened from school without stopping to examine the shop-windows or consider chances of coasting and skating. Boys pulled their caps well down over their ears and wound their tippets tightly about their necks, while girls enveloped their heads in shawls and made the most of muffs and mittens.

Even the street gamins, accustomed to brave all weathers in their struggle for existence, and ever on the alert to snatch some advantage from the misfortunes or generosity of others, retired to sheltered nooks, or huddled together over the gratings, through which some warmth escaped from fires in the basements of adjacent

buildings. Policemen were merciful that day, so that fewer orders to move were given.

"Starvin's 'most as bad as freezin'," muttered one of a group who had been fortunate in their choice of grates, emphasizing the assertion with terrible oaths. "I'm off on a scout for fillin'."

"Go it, Scraps, and don't forget your friends," replied another. "I'm too well-off to move till I'm drove. I can't; but if you have a crust too many I'll take it."

"Number one's enough for me such a day as this. Wish I was rich, and I'd feed you all; but I've met with heavy losses." And before any response could be made to this attempt at pleasantry, Scraps had darted away, intent upon obtaining food and drink.

He prided himself upon his honesty, repelling indignantly every suspicion that he would commit a theft, and yet his companions wondered at his strange good-fortune. He had been watched for hours when the officer knew he neither begged nor worked, while at the same time he found means to satisfy his hunger. If a bundle was dropped, he hastened to return it to its owner, notwithstanding he had himself jostled it to the ground. If money was lost he was not so particular, and it was his especial delight to see some well-dressed lad fall upon the pavement or stumble at a crossing. He knew what confectioners were most patronized by those who had plenty of pocket-money, and many a penny had fallen to his share in a mysterious manner.

"Wonder if that swell cove 'll be out to-day?" he soliloquized between his spasmodic struggles to make some headway against opposing forces. "Hope he'll drop another quarter and I'll find it. He haint no busi-

ness with so much when I haint got nothin'. Ought to go shares with me. Why can't he?" And, with this question still in mind, Scraps found himself at his favorite post of observation.

Despite the cold, circumstances were propitious. The very lad he hoped to see was entering the saloon, while a servant, restraining the impatience of a pair of spirited horses, waited the pleasure of his young master. The horses grew so restive that, as the latter appeared, he saw the necessity of the case, and, after fumbling at his pockets for a moment, threw down the piece of silver he found it inconvenient to return to his purse.

"Take it, and much good may it do you," he muttered, as he saw it snatched away almost before it had touched the pavement. But it was all the same to Scraps as if it had been bestowed most graciously.

"A quarter; and I'll have a square meal, with something to warm me up besides. Them boxes, too, in the corner has got room behind right over the grate, and there won't nobody move things to-day. Wonder if I'll find the fat woman round? If I do I'm in double luck. She'll want her bottle filled, and I'm the cove that can buy whisky or gin for meself or another."

He crept stealthily around to the rear of the building, where he peered through a narrow window, and, seeing the face he sought, ventured to rap for admittance.

"What brings ye again?" asked the woman, looking at him curiously. "What is 't ye want?"

"Victuals; and I've the money to pay. I'm hungry, orful."

"Fa'th, and ye look it, an' enough here for a score like ye that'll go to the pigs; an' ye may have yer fill,

if ye'll take the jug for me. Here's the money, an mind ye do it on the sly, an' be quick, 'fore ony one cooms."

The boy did not need this caution. He was too anxious for his dinner to make any delay, and knew too well the penalty of being found there to run a risk which could be avoided. He returned in the shortest possible time to find a heaped-up tray of food, from which he was allowed to select at his pleasure; and as he was by no means fastidious, he dined sumptuously. Then, with the precious quarter still in his possession, he ensconced himself behind the boxes already noticed, where he slept soundly until some time in the night, when he awoke to congratulate himself upon his comfortable quarters. He was inclined to sleep again, but, as he desired time for reflection, he roused himself by rubbing his eyes vigorously and pushing back his tangled hair.

According to the best of his knowledge, he was about twelve years of age, without father or mother, brother or sister. He could remember of having lived with an old woman who told him that, when she was gone, he would be obliged to fight his own way in the world—a fact which he had found sadly true.

He was beginning to feel a sense of injustice in the distribution of this world's goods, and wondered, as have so many others, why one should be rich and another poor. He had never been taught to study or work, yet he had managed in some way to learn the alphabet, and had a natural aptitude for general usefulness. He might sell papers, but the business was so overdone that new recruits were unwelcome.

He had reached this point when he heard footsteps

approaching, and knew that he must bid good-bye to the warmth and shelter he had so long enjoyed. Leaping from his grated bed, he was soon lost to sight in the shadow of the surrounding buildings; yet all through the day he puzzled his head with vain endeavors to solve the mysteries of fortune. When his money was gone he forgot to philosophize, and looked about sharply for the means of subsistence, and upon two occasions put himself in the way of receiving help from the lad who, by some strange reasoning, he came to regard as one who had deprived him of a part of his birthright. He learned the name of this fortunate boy, and often stood before a large, elegant mansion, wishing it was his home, and he was Helmer Bryant instead of Scraps. He tried to imagine what the interior of this house was like, and once, when many guests were entering, he caught a glimpse of the hall, with its wide staircase, down which were passing richly-dressed ladies, smiling as sweetly as though there was no outside world where hunger and want held sway.

It chanced that, after two years of waiting and watching, Scraps was able to render Helmer Bryant an important service, for which he received a generous gift of clothing and money. This brought the two more closely together, although but one recognized the common ground upon which they were standing.

There were many to wish the son of wealth a happy and prosperous career; there were none to care for the homeless, friendless waif. A doting mother lavished upon one the entire love of her widowed heart, while the world seemed leagued against the other. Riches already in possession, and the prospective heir of mil-

lions ; while over against this destiny was present destitution with a hopeless future.

Scraps waited another two years, when, finding that luck continued against him, he started on a tramp, and, while passing through a town where was a popular school for boys, he again saw Helmer Bryant surveying the surrounding scene with haughty indifference. The ragged tramp was nothing to the aristocratic student, yet the student was much to his unfortunate observer. He was the representative of the favored class. He was even more than this : he was the very personification of affluent ease. Scraps managed to remain in town for a few days, hoping to receive some assistance, but, being disappointed in these hopes, was forced to move on.

In winter he returned to the city, where he could make the most of his resources and secure the semblance of a home. Meanwhile, his appetite for alcoholic drinks developed and increased until it became the ruling passion of his life. He no longer boasted of his honesty. Money for liquor must be had by some means, and at twenty-one he was a confirmed drunkard.

Still, he kept up his knowledge of Helmer Bryant ; knew when the latter was in college, and when a grand party was given to celebrate the twenty-first birthday of this scion of a proud and wealthy family. The house was ablaze with light. Beautiful women and noble-looking men thronged the apartments, through which floated strains of music and the perfume of flowers.

"Guess I'm twenty-one, and nobody don't do nothing for me," muttered the vagrant. "'Taint fair, and——"

Here his complaints were arrested by the gleaming of silver which had fallen from a careless hand, and, seiz-

ing it, he hastened to a drinking den, where he exchanged it for a draught so potent as to render him oblivious to all considerations of injustice.

A few weeks later he saw the doors of the Bryant mansion open to admit two men who carried between them an apparently lifeless body taken from a carriage which was driven rapidly away. It was in the dead of night, but from his hiding-place he heard the remark :

“That young fellow better keep an eye to windward or he'll lose the old man's money. It won't take forever to run through his own and his mother's property, the way he goes on. The old man will cut him off with a shilling, if he gets to be a common drunkard.”

“He's that now, only he drinks choice wines and pays for them. If he was a poor woman's son he'd been sent up before this ; and he may, as it is, before he dies.”

Scraps understood what was implied by being “sent up.” He, too, had avoided this punishment. The swell cove and himself were becoming more alike. They both drank liquor, and both were sometimes intoxicated. He wished he could once drink a full supply of wine, so that he could intelligently compare drunkenness in high life with drunkenness in low life.

His associations were such that he knew no more of Helmer Bryant, except by an occasional glimpse from time to time, until he saw Mrs. Bryant and her son standing on the deck of an outward-bound steamer, and a bystander said they were to spend the next two years in Europe.

Strange as it may seem, the ragged, wretched fellow waved a farewell with his tattered hat, feeling that a

friend was going from him. His last chance for any good-fortune had vanished. He became more reckless and drank more deeply; tramped more and worked less. He was a thoroughly besotted drunkard, finding his only sober recreation in watching the house, every window and cornice of which was familiar to him. He was looking forward anxiously to the return of its inmates, when an auctioneer's flag, conspicuously displayed, gave notice that it was to change owners. Mingling with the motley crowd gathered to see and hear what might transpire, he learned that Mrs. Bryant was dead and her son still in Europe, where he had contracted heavy debts, for the payment of which his mother's estate was to be sacrificed.

"He has gone down fast, and nobody can calculate where he will land," said an elderly man. "He bears an honored name, but he has disgraced it, and the chances are that he will die an outcast from society. Dissipation makes strange changes in our American families, where property is not entailed. A millionaire to-day, and the inmate of a poor-house or a prison ten years from to-day. Helmer Bryant will never spend the old man's money, as he has his own and his mother's."

"Think he'll come back?" asked another.

"I think he will. He will run short of funds and come back for a supply. It takes money to keep up the style of living he has adopted."

This was true, as the young man found to his cost, and, taking passage for his native land, wondered vaguely what welcome he should receive from the relative to whom he persuaded himself he had a right to look for substantial assistance. Upon reaching his des

tination he took rooms at a fashionable hotel, and called upon his friends ; but he found it exceedingly difficult to ask for a loan of money, which all knew he had no means of returning.

“ I will give you a chance to help me in my business, and pay you a fair salary—enough to meet all reasonable expenses and allow you to save something, if you are economical,” responded the old gentleman to whom he made application. “ You are twenty-six years old and never earned a dollar. You have spent two fortunes, and if you would have another you must earn it ; you can’t look to me for the third. Go to work, and show yourself a man.”

Necessity knows no choice. The business proposed was undertaken ; but, through want of application, an utter failure was the only result. He was dismissed from this position, and established in another where there would be less of responsibility ; yet here the services he performed were merely nominal.

His dissipated habits clung to him. He laid aside some of his fine manners, grew careless of his dress and personal appearance, and contented himself with cheap lodgings. He was shunned by his former associates ; and at last, when the estate he had once regarded as his own, subject only to the life use of another, was devised, he found himself entitled to no more than a moderate allowance from the income of property in the hands of trustees.

“ Aint rich after all,” mumbled Scraps, who seemed to know almost by instinct when any change occurred to affect the fortunes of Helmer Bryant.

Gradually the latter withdrew from familiar scenes,

appearing only to claim his quarterly dues, and then betaking himself to some place where he could drink and drown all memory of other days. He was often arrested for drunkenness, and as often dismissed with a reprimand, when, having committed an aggravated assault, he was held for trial. Chained to another prisoner, he moved sullenly away with downcast eyes and averted face, while an expression of savage satisfaction rested upon the features of his companion. This companion was Scraps, who felt that justice long delayed was now meted out impartially.

In the city papers appeared an item referring to the sad spectacle thus afforded, and commenting upon the terrible downfall of one whose early life had promised so much. Two who had commenced their career as far removed from each other as is luxurious affluence from squalid poverty, or elegant culture from brutish ignorance, had met upon the same level, brought there by the same causes, and finally adjudged to the same punishment.

To the highest and the lowest, to the richest and the poorest, strong drink is an enemy, having regard to neither rank, position, nor expectations.

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